INTRODUCTION TO THE NEW ENCLOSURES

...the historical movement which changes the producers into waged workers, appears on the one hand as their emancipation from serfdom and from the fetters of the guilds, and this side alone exists for our bourgeois historians. But on the other hand these new freedmen became sellers of themselves only after they had been robbed of all their own means of production and all the guarantees of existence offered by the old feudal arrangements. And the history of this, their expropriation, is written in the annals of mankind in letters of blood and fire.

-Karl Marx, *Capital, Vol. 1*

The docile Sambo could and did become the revolutionary Nat Turner overnight. The slaves, under the leadership of those from the more complex African societies, fought and ran away, stole and feigned innocence, malingered on the job while seeming to work as hard as possible. And they lived to fight another day.

-George Rawick, *From Sundown to Sunup*

Glasnost,

End of the Cold War,

United Europe,

We are the World,

Save the Amazon Rain Forest...these are typical phrases of the day. They suggest an age of historic openness, globalism, and breakdown of political and economic barriers. In the midst of this expansiveness, however, Midnight Notes poses the issue of "The New Enclosures." For a corrosive secret is hidden in the gleaming idols of globalism, the end of the blocs and Gaian ecological consciousness: the last decade has seen the largest Enclosure of the worldly Common in history. Our articles reveal this secret in detail, as well as the resistance to it. This introduction explains the meaning and importance of Enclosures, both Old and New, in the planetary struggle of classes.

The Old Enclosures were a counter-revolutionary process whereby, after a century of high wages and breakdown of feudal authority, beginning in the late 1400s, farmers in England were expropriated from their land and commons by state officials and landlords. They were turned into paupers, vagabonds and beggars, and later into waged workers, while the land was put to work to feed the incipient international market for agricultural commodities.

According to the Marxist tradition, the Enclosures were the starting point of capitalist society. They were the basic device of "original accumulation" which created a population of workers "free" from any means of reproduction and thus compelled (in time) to work for a wage.

The Enclosures, however, are not a one time process exhausted at the dawn of capitalism. They are a regular return on the path of accumulation and a structural component of class struggle. Any leap in proletarian power demands a dynamic capitalist response: both the expanded appropriation of new resources and new labor power and the extension of capitalist relations, or else capitalism is threatened with extinction. Thus, Enclosure is one process that unifies proletarians throughout capital's history, for despite our differences we all have entered capitalism through the same door: the loss of our land and of the rights attached to it, whether this loss has taken place in Front Mill, England, in southern Italy, in the Andes, on the Niger Delta, or in the Lower East Side of New York City.

The Apocalypse of the Trinity of Deals

Today, once again, the Enclosures are the common denominator of proletarian experience across the globe. In the biggest diaspora of the century, on every continent millions are being uprooted from their land, their jobs, their homes through wars, famines, plagues, and the IMF ordered devaluations (the four knights of the modern apocalypse) and scattered to the corners of the globe.

In Nigeria, for example, people currently are being thrown off communally-owned land by troops to make way for plantations owned and managed by the World Bank. The reason? The government points to the "debt crisis" and the International Monetary Fund dictated "Structural Adjustment Program"(SAP) allegedly devised for its solution. The SAP for Nigeria is similar to SAPs being implemented throughout Asia, Africa and Latin America. They invariably include the commercialization of agriculture and the demonetarization of the economy via massive devaluations which reduce money wages to a paper value. The result is destruction of village communities, emigration to nearby cities and then, for the desperate, clever or lucky, a chance to work in New York or Naples.

In the United States, millions are homeless and on the move. The immediate reasons are highly publicized: the farm crisis, the steep rise of rental and mortgage payments relative to wages, the warehousing of apartments and gentrification, the collapse of the social safety net, union busting. Behind these

reasons, however, is a fact: the decline, since 1973, of real wages for the mass of workers. The post-WWII interclass deal that guaranteed real wage increases is now definitively over and the homeless are the shock(ed) troops of this fact. But even those whose wages have escaped the deal's collapse complain of the concomitant loss of the natural Commons due to a series of Big Catastrophes from the vanishing ozone layer to the burnt-out rain forests.

In China, the transition to a "free market economy" has led to the displacement of one hundred million from their communally operated lands. Their urban counterparts are facing the loss of guaranteed jobs in factories and offices and the prospect of emigrating from one city to another to look for a wage. The "iron rice bowl" is to be smashed while a similar scenario is developing in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. The post-WWII OECD (Western European-North American-Japanese), socialist, and third-worldist deals are all now null and void, as the examples of the US, China and Nigeria show. We refuse to mourn them. For who first voided them but brother and sister proletarians around the planet who desired and demanded more, much more than what was settled for? Not surprisingly, the old python of Capital has reacted instinctually and "originally" with a new lunge and the bite of Enclosures. This issue of Midnight Notes will show the unity of capital's reaction in the most diverse places and names, as well as the polymorphous struggle aiming to transcend it.

For every factory in a free-trade zone in China privatized and sold to a New York commercial bank, or for every acre enclosed by a World Bank development project in Africa or Asia a corresponding enclosure must occur in the U.S. and Western Europe.

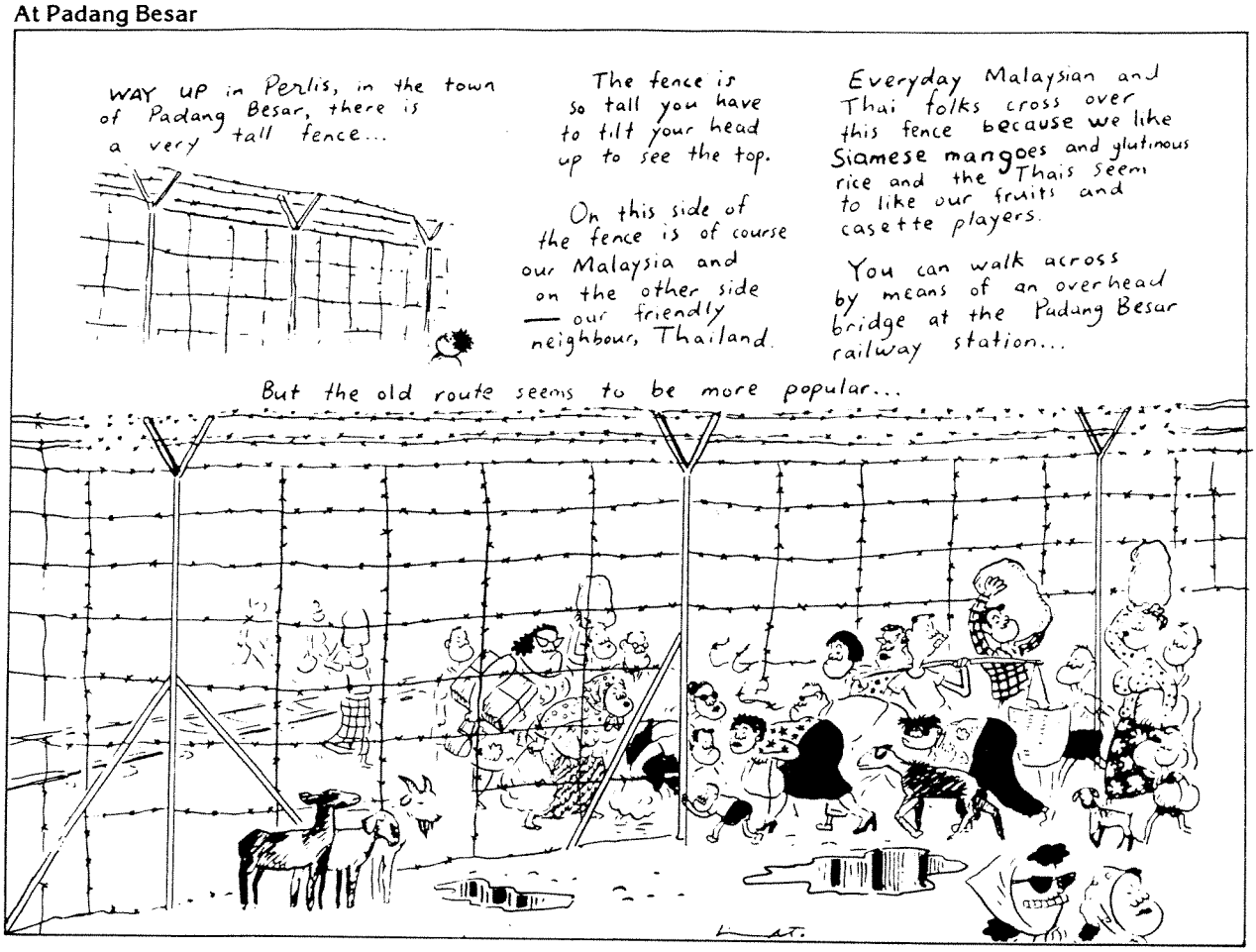
The "debt crisis," "homelessness," and "the collapse of socialism" are frequently treated as different phenomena by both the media and left journals. For us at Midnight they but deceptively name aspects of a single unified process: the New Enclosures, which must operate throughout the planet in differing, divisive guises while being totally interdependent.

Under the logic of capitalist accumulation in this period, for every factory in a free-trade zone in China privatized and sold to a New York commercial bank, or for every acre enclosed by a World Bank development project in Africa or Asia as part of a "debt for equity" swap, a corresponding enclosure must occur in the U.S. and Western Europe. Thus when communal land in Nigeria is expropriated or when the policy of free housing for workers is abolished in China, there must be a matching expropriation in the U.S. be it the end of a "good paying" factory job in Youngstown, the destruction of a working class community in Jay, Maine or the imposition of martial law in New York City's parks. With each contraction of "communal rights" in the Third World or of "socialist rights" in the Soviet Union and China, comes a subtraction of our seemingly sacred "social rights" in the U.S. Indeed, this subtraction has gone on so thoroughly in the 1980s that even the definition of what it means to be human is being revised by both capital and the proletariat.

This mutual contraction of the "right to subsist" in the Third World, the socialist countries and in the U.S. is no accident. In no way could capital have won in any place if it had not operated in every place. Only if Filipinos thrown off the land could be used in "free enterprise zones" in Manila or as "shit" workers in Italy could capital reduce real wages in the U.S. or sustain chronically high unemployment rates in Europe. Third world and socialist enclosures, apparently so distant and exotic from Boston or New York, inevitably become First World ones, equally distant and exotic from Lagos or Beijing.

FEBRUARY 26, 1989
BOSTON SUNDAY GLOBE
BLOOM COUNTY
BY BERKE BREATHED
MY GOD... THIS IS SUCH A QUALITY COUNTRY.
WHADDYA MEAN, MR. TRUMP?
MY PALM BEACH COTTAGE HAS 118 ROOMS...
HOW MANY ROOMS DOES YOUR COTTAGE HAVE?
ONE. BUT WE HAVE NINE BEDS! REYNELDA HERE SLEEPS IN A SOUP BOX.
I HAVE A $100 MILLION BOAT. DO YOU HAVE A BOAT?
WHEN THE PLUMBING BREAKS OUR SOFA FLOATS!
I HAVE A DREAM...
A DREAM THAT ONE DAY I MIGHT GET SIX POINTS ON MARGIN FOR THE EIFFEL TOWER DEAL...
WHAT DO YOU DREAM ABOUT?
DINNER.
AND IMAGINE... IN THIS GREAT, QUALITY NATION, FOLKS LIKE YOU HAVEN'T STRUNG FOLKS LIKE ME UP BY THEIR INTESTINES!
HUSH.
...YET.

At Padang Besar


WAY UP in Perlis, in the town of Padang Besar, there is a very tall fence...
The fence is so tall you have to tilt your head up to see the top.
On this side of the fence is of course our Malaysia and on the other side — our friendly neighbour, Thailand.
Everyday Malaysian and Thai folks cross over this fence because we like Siamese mangoes and glutinous rice and the Thais seem to like our fruits and casette players.
You can walk across by means of an overhead bridge at the Padang Besar railway station...
But the old route seems to be more popular...

The New Enclosures are so radical in their attack on what proletarian struggles in the course of history have imposed as human rights because capital confronted a life-and-death crisis that precluded any social-democratic deal. At the end of WWII, capital (in its Western and Eastern modes) offered a variety of slogans to the world proletariat: from "collective bargaining" and "racial integration" in the US, to the family "social wage" in the USSR, to "colonial emancipation" in Asia and Africa. An enormous struggle ensued to determine the content of these slogans; but between 1965 and 1975, proletarian initiatives transcended the limits of capital's historic possibilities. From the Watts riot to the "Prague Spring" to Italy's "hot autumn" to the last US helicopter escaping from the fall of Saigon, the profit picture internationally turned sour and capital was facing euthanasia. Consequently, all deals were off and capital went on the attack everywhere.

Only if Filipinos thrown off the land could be used in "free enterprise zones" in Manila or as "shit" workers in Italy could capital reduce real wages in the U.S. or sustain chronically high unemployment in Europe.

At the end of the 1980s, capital seems to have gotten the better of the nullification of these various social contracts. For example, the U.S. Left currently looks at "collective bargaining" and "racial integration" as utopias, while the Soviet workers anxiously watch as their "social wage" rapidly recedes into the past. Indeed, "colonial emancipation" is a phrase that, if any one has the bad taste to bring it up, can only cause derision. How have these "inalienable rights" been so rapidly alienated? Through the operation of the New Enclosures which attempt to eliminate any "traditional," "organic" or institutionalized relation between proletarians themselves and the powers of the earth or of their past.

These New Enclosures, therefore, name the large-scale reorganization of the accumulation process which has been underway since the mid-1970s. The main objective of this process has been to uproot workers from the terrain on which their organizational power has been built, so that, like the African slaves transplanted to the Americas, they are forced to work and fight in a strange environment where the forms of resistance possible at home are no longer available.

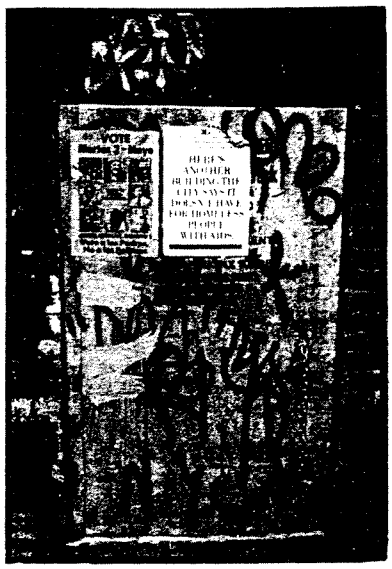
Thus, once again, as at the dawn of capitalism, the physiognomy of the world proletariat is that of the pauper, the vagabond, the criminal, the panhandler, the street peddler, the refugee sweatshop worker, the mercenary, the rioter.

The Pentagon of Enclosures

How have the New Enclosures been worked? First and foremost the New Enclosures operate exactly as the Old Enclosures did: by ending communal control of the means of subsistence. There are very few groups today who still can

provide directly with their land and their work for their own needs. Even the last "aboriginals" from Indonesia to the Amazonas are being violently enclosed in governmental reservations. More commonly, the so-called "peasant" in the Third World today is a person who survives thanks to remittances from a brother or sister who has emigrated to New York; or by growing, in the most dangerous work conditions, poppies or coca leaves for export; or by prostituting him/herself to the carriers of hard-currencies (the great and perhaps only aphrodisiac of the age); or by migrating to the nearby cities to join the swelling ranks of day laborers, street peddlers or "free enterprise zone" workers, where conditions are often more dangerous than in the poppy fields back home.

The second major method of the New Enclosures is again similar to the Old: seizing land for debt. Just as the Tudor court sold off huge tracts of monastery and communal land to their creditors, so too modern African and Asian governments agree to capitalize and "rationalize" agricultural land in order to satisfy IMF auditors who will only "forgive" foreign loans under those conditions. Just as heads of clans in the Scottish Highlands of the eighteenth century connived with local merchants and bankers to whom they were indebted in order to "clear the land" of their own clansmen and women, so too local chiefs in Africa and Asia exchange communal land rights for unredeemed loans. The result now as then is enclosure: the internal and external destruction of traditional rights to subsistence. This is the secret hidden in the noise of the "debt crisis."



Third, the New Enclosures make mobile and migrant labor the dominant form of labor. We are now the most geographically mobile labor force since the advent of capitalism. Capital keeps us constantly on the move, separating us from our countries, farms, gardens, homes, workplaces because this guarantees cheap wages, communal disorganization and maximum vulnerability in front of law courts and police.

Fourth, the New Enclosures require the collapse of socialism from the USSR, to Poland to China. The aim of Enclosure could not be realized unless there was a dramatic increase in the international competition of workers and thus an enormous expansion of the world labor market. One third of the world's proletariat could no longer be kept out of competition with the rest of the world proletariat while socialist capital could no longer repress the socialist working class' desire to be able to appropriate universal wealth...even though this wealth be embodied in the commodity form.

For a long time socialism has ceased to be a pole of proletarian attraction. The anti-colonial revolutions of the 1960s and the primary commodities boom of the 1970s gave it some breathing space, but by the 1980s the game was up. The reasons for socialism's collapse are, in retrospect at least, rather obvious. Socialism is another name for a class "deal" that normally exchanges a guaranteed job at a lower level of exploitation for lower wages. "Lower," of course, is a relative term and it presupposes a comparison with a capitalist standard. The deal works as long as the guarantees, the exploitation and the wages are in synch.

By the 1980s, especially with the collapse of energy prices, socialist wages became too low on an international standard for the socialist working class to tolerate. But the exploitation rate the state demanded was simultaneously too high, while its guarantees were looking less and less promising to the proletariat. For with the computer-based technological leap, the expansion of production into the low waged Third World, and the end of the energy crisis in the OECD countries, the value of socialist work on the world market collapsed. It was not merely lower, it was almost nil. The "deal" fell apart at the seams and the piece-meal attempts to patch it worsened the tear. For example, the loans taken out by Eastern European countries in the 1970s (similar to the Third World loans of the time) to allow them to take part in the technological leap has required an enormous increase in exploitation and decrease in wages. The result: rebellion, disgruntlement and emigration.

Should we shed tears for this fallen deal? Hardly. For the collapse of socialism provides the definitive answer to the riddle of the Great Twentieth Century Sphinx: the socialist working class. How many tomes have been written to determine whether this rough beast really is a working class? We can now consign them to the archives, for the socialist working class has come out of the closet. The fairy tale of "opposing blocs" is finished and we can directly see the class struggle from Berlin to Ho Chi Minh City. We now have the same bosses and can compare, on the same jobs, the relative merits of the different systems. If anything, the working class "virtues of socialism" will especially be tested in the next decade. When the new class struggles of the 1990s erupt in Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union and China, we will then see if the values of "solidarity," "cooperation" and "internationalism" have really sedimented.

We are now the most geographically mobile labor force since the advent of capitalism.

The fifth aspect of the New Enclosures' operation is in its attack on our reproduction: making us mutants as well as migrants! The highly advertized disappearance of the rain forest, the much commented upon hole in the ozone layer, the widely lamented pollution of air, sea and beach, along with the obvious shrinking of our living spaces, are all a part of the destruction of the earthly commons. Even the high seas have been enclosed in the 1980s with the dramatic extension of the traditional territorial limits. You need not be a science fiction freak to feel that we are guinea pigs in a capitalist experiment in nonevolutionary species change. Human proletarians are not alone in this speed-

up and shrink-down. Animals, from protozoa to cows, are being engineered and patented to eat oilspills, produce more eggs per hour, secrete more hormones. Increasingly, land is no longer valued for how much food it can grow or what kind of buildings it can support but for how much radioactive waste it can "safely" store. Thus a tired earthly commons, the gift of billions of years of laborless transformation, meets tired human bodies.

Capital has long dreamed of sending us to work in space, where nothing would be left to us except our work-machine and rarified and repressive work relations (see "Mormons in Space," *Computer State Notes*, Midnight Notes #5). But the fact is that the earth is becoming a space station and millions are already living in space-colony conditions: no oxygen to breathe, limited social/physical contact, a desexualized life, difficulty of communication, lack of sun and green...even the voices of the migrating birds are missing.

The sentimental horror of this aspect of the New Enclosures has turned a profit for many a publisher and film corporation but we would like to point out its purgative value. For the bodily and personal common, which for most of the proletariat had been free, is now increasingly being enclosed for all to see. Appearance and attitude are increasingly aspects of the work process in the so-called "service industries" from restaurants to hospitals. In the past how a worker looked or what s/he felt on the assembly line, farm or in the mine was immaterial to the wage relation. This has definitively changed. Those who "work with the public" are now continually monitored from their urine to their sweat glands to their back brains. Capital now treats us as did the inquisitors of old, looking for the devil's marks of class struggle on our bodies and demanding that we open it up for alienation. The most "extreme" case of this enclosure is in the personal-political debates around the increasing recourse to reconstructive surgery in the working class. The siliconed breasts of the recent Miss America are the concrete universals of this trend. Are we to lament or condemn them? No, for they simply point out that though the bourgeoisie had long lost its body, the working class is now being forced to follow suit. Not only "beauty queens" and "male leads" must buy and rebuy their bodies piece-by-piece, reconstructive surgery is now a must for many jobs in the "service economy" and exposes for all of us to see and evaluate the commodity nature of capitalist relations.

These five aspects of capital's response to class struggle have been at least partially successful due to their ability to recapitulate proletarian desires. After all, even during the period of the Old Enclosures many were attracted to the possibilities of universal consumption offered by urban life and did not wait for the state thugs' arrival on the village green to head for the city. A similar point can be made about present-day socialism. For the socialist workers' desire to participate in the exchange of universal labor has been a crucial factor in the "battering down" the walls of socialism. Indeed, the allure of the world market lies not in its evident exploitative consequences but rather in the energies it unleashes for travel, communication and wealth appropriation. Post-WWII socialism was certainly unable to generate alternative models of international exchange and reproduction either in the form of a Comintern bureaucracy or Che Guevara's ideals, hence socialist internationalism on the economic plane evaporated in the current crisis.

The Spiral of Struggle

Though the New Enclosures have been able to entice and divide, they have been fiercely fought and have brought about, unintendedly, an increased proletarian knowledge and autonomy. Most obviously, the planet has rung and reverberated with anti-IMF demonstrations, riots and rebellions. In 1989 alone, the streets and campuses of Venezuela, Burma, Zaire, Nigeria, and Argentina have seen confrontations between armed troops and students and workers who chant "Death to the IMF," loot foreign commodities markets, excarcerate prisoners, and burn banks. Though access to universal wealth is desired, the institutional forms of the world market that are using the "debt crisis" to create the New Enclosures are physically under a self-conscious attack throughout Africa, Latin America and Asia.

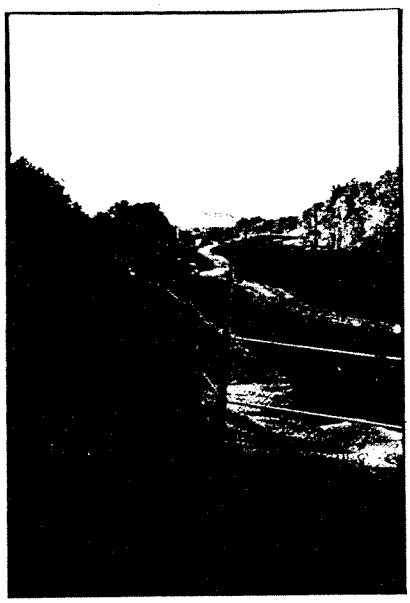
Not only is the money form of the New Enclosures being resisted, there has been a world-wide land war taking place in the 1980s. Up the Andes into Central America and Mexico there has been desperate and chronic armed struggle over the control of land (frequently referred to in the U.S. as an aspect of the "drug problem"). In West Africa there is a microlevel of armed struggle against land seizures by the state and development banks (frequently discussed as anachronistic "tribal war"). In southern Africa, the battle over land and its control, both in town and country, is included as an aspect of "the struggle against apartheid," while in East Africa it is considered a "problem of nationalities." Land War is, of course, what the "Palestinian issue" is about, while from Afghanistan through India to Sri Lanka, the Philippines and Indonesia, proletarians have taken up arms against the New Enclosures in a wide variety of forms. But in the 1980s this Land War has not only been a rural, "third worldist" struggle. From West Berlin, to Zurich, to Amsterdam, to London, to New York, squatters, street people and the "homeless" have battled against police, arsonists in the pay of real estate developers, and other agents of "spatial deconcentration" not simply for "housing" but for land and all that it means.

These direct, violent and frequently armed confrontations have certainly limited the pace and scope of the New Enclosures but there have been other, often unintended, consequences of the New Enclosures that will perhaps be even more central to

their universal leveling. First, the New Enclosures have led to an enormous increase and intensification of proletarian knowledge of the international class composition. For example, the average West African farmer in the 1980s knows about the deals that can go down in Brooklyn, London and Venice. Second, the New Enclosures have forced an internationalism of proletarian action, since the proletariat has never been so compelled to overcome its regionalism and nationalism, as people are losing not just their plot of land but their stake in their countries. Third, the very extremities of the debt crisis and the need to organize reproduction outside of the money relation has often forced workers to develop their autonomy by imposing the task of creating a whole system of production and reproduction outside of the standard operating procedures of capitalist society.

The Marxist Ghost at Midnight

These unintended consequences of the New Enclosures and their possibilities are themes near and dear to the work of Marx and Engels, and it is time now to speak of them. For one of the central ironies of the present is that at the very time when socialism is collapsing, Marx's predictions concerning the development of capitalism are being verified. Though "postist" intellectuals are now dancing on Marx's grave while "Marxists" are desperately trying to revise their curriculum vitae, Marx's theory has never been so true. What are we seeing now but the famous "immiseration of the working class," "the expansion of the world market," "universal competition among workers," and "rising organic composition of capital"? How can we understand anything about this world without using the axioms of Marx's theory of work, money and profit? Capitalists certainly cannot!



Theoretically; then, Marx's ghost still speaks truly at midnight. Strategically, however, Marx and Engels fail at this moment of the New Enclosures. It is worthwhile to explain why. The Marx of *Capital*, while recognizing the complexity of the situation, would have most likely understood the New Enclosures as he did the Old: they were fundamentally a stage in the "progressive nature" of capitalist development as it prepares the material conditions for a communist society. The two decisive tendencies in this development are: (1) it breaks down local barriers and the separation of town and country, thus producing a truly universal human being capable of benefitting from the world-wide production of cultural and material wealth, and (2) it unifies the international working class which increasingly recognizes and acts on its common interest. Consequently, for all the pain and death, the "blood and fire" of the Old Enclosures, they were inevitable and ultimately historically positive, for they accomplished "the dissolution of private property based on the labour of its owner."

By destroying the mode of production "where the laborer is the private owner of his own means of labor set in action by himself: the peasant of the land which he cultivates, the artisan of the tool which he handles as a virtuoso," the Enclosures set the stage for the creation of "capitalist private property, already practically resting on socialized production." The Enclosures, therefore, are the "protracted, violent, and difficult" transformation that makes possible the easier "expropriation of a few usurpers by the mass of people" in the communist revolution.

The problem with this analysis is simple: the New Enclosures (and probably many of the Old) are not aimed only at petty private producers and their property. They also aim to destroy communal land and space that forms an energy well of proletarian power. A Quiche indian village in the Guatemalan hills, a tract of communally operated land in the Niger Delta, an urban neighborhood like Tepito in Mexico City, a town surrounding a paper mill controlled by striking paperworkers like Jay, Maine, do not fit into the classic Marxist model of the Enclosures. In each of these examples we are not confronted with a number of isolated, petty producers but a staging point for proletarian attack or a logistical locus. It is plain madness to accept the demise of such villages, tracts of land, neighborhoods and towns as necessary and ultimately progressive sacrifices to the destruction of capitalism and the development of truly "universal" proletarians. Universal or not, real, living proletarians (that do not live on air) must put their feet some place, must strike from some place, must rest some place, must retreat some place. For class war does not happen on an abstract board toting up profit and loss, it is a war that needs a terrain.

Marx's righteous horror of "petty producers" and their disgusting behavior must not lead us to a loss of strategic reality under the rubric of honorific formulae. He did not see in 1867 the possibilities of proletarian power, however contradictory, in the intact communal life of millions in Africa, Asia, Oceania and the Americas. One certainly cannot find in *Capital* a call for the European proletariat to fight against the Enclosure of these communal peoples.

Similarly, Engels could not see a new communal power developing in the proletarian quarters of the new industrial cities of Europe that needed to be struggled for. To understand this strategic failure, let us look at a truly remarkable work of Engels, *The Housing Question* (1872), written a year after the Paris Commune. It is lucid, trenchant and more insightful than anything the housing and homelessness movement has recently produced. Engels seems to be describing, as if in a vision, New York of the 1980s by drawing on his observations of nineteenth-century London, Manchester, Paris and Berlin. He even describes a nineteenth century version of "spatial deconcentration" he attributes to Haussman, a Bonapartist urban developer. Haussman apparently planned "breaking long straight and broad streets through the closely-built workers' quarters and erecting big luxurious buildings on both sides of them, the intention thereby, apart from the strategic aim of making barricade fighting more difficult, being also to develop a specifically

Bonapartist building trades proletariat dependent on the government and to turn the city into a pure luxury city."

But in the midst of these acute observations, Engels' actual discussion of the "housing question" is disappointing. Why? Because he puts aside his strategic standpoint, namely, how does the spatially defined class composition in a city determine working class power, to deal with two other classic Marxist points: (a) the average house rent paid by workers is simply a redistribution of surplus value between industrial capitalists and rentiers, (b) the "solution" to the housing question cannot be the promotion of home ownership since that would "bougeoisify" workers and delay the coming of the real solution, revolution. The first point is abstract and, more or less, true, while the second reflects the horror-of-the-petty-proprietor-vacuum typical of Marx and Engels. Therefore, he nowhere takes up the defense of workers' quarters as an essential aspect of the "housing question" and an important strategic consideration of class thought.

It appears that in Engels' judgement, the housing market can totally transform the spatial composition of an urban working class and yet be irrelevant to "the housing question." Aside from being absurd, this is certainly not the view of capital's Hausmanns then and now. Certainly Engels should have realized that revolutions are not made in a heaven of ideas, they are usually made, at least in their final stages, in cities where the question of disposition of forces is crucial. Perhaps Engels' strategic neglect of working class topology was a product of the failure of the now classic revolutionary scenario of the Paris Commune played out a year before *The Housing Question* was published. More likely it was the result of a deeper categorical failure of Marxist understanding of the Enclosures that remains central to Marxism to this day. This is especially true of its "third worldist" variants that are frequently accepted by those in the frontline struggles against the New Enclosures, either as organizers of anti-IMF demos or guerrilla armies fighting for land. These forms of Marxism are now in deep crisis. At first sight the crisis of "third world" Marxism seems rooted in the collapse of its major socialist models, the Soviet Union and China, and has nothing to do with the understanding of the Enclosures both Old and New. First and foremost, therefore, the crisis appears as the end of military and economic aid that often had been provided by the socialist bloc as an aspect of "proletarian internationalism." Such a view is superficial.

"Third world" Marxists accept the notion of the progressivity of original accumulation. Consequently, even though they officially fight against the New Enclosures, they envision their party and state as carrying out their own Enclosures on their own people even more efficiently and "progressively" than the capitalists could do. They interpret communal ownership of land and the local market exchanges as being the marks of "petty bourgeois" characteristics they must extirpate. Their revolutionary action aims to nationalize land and wipe out local markets as well as kick out the IMF and the "comprador" ruling elite. Yet the first goal is an anathema to many of those people attracted by the struggle against the New Enclosures in the first place! The confusion thickens at victory where there is a tendency to create or continue the two "advanced" forms of land tenure—state plantations (Mozambique) or capitalist farms (Zimbabwe)—at the expense of communal possibilities and actualities. Inevitably the conditions for counterrevolution ripen while the impossibility of carrying out autarkic economic measures becomes clear, since the very structures that might have sustained autarky and denied land to the "contras" have been destroyed by the revolutionary forces themselves.

As a consequence, low intensity counterrevolutionary warfare and high interest rates unravel the revolution. For it is relatively easy in the late twentieth century to practice the science of revolution and succeed. It is this ease that has made it imperative for capital, on the other side, to make sure that the consequences of winning will be catastrophe and despair. Hence the crisis of the third worldist left, which has its roots not only in the insidious demonic plans of the CIA, but also in the failure of Marx's own analysis of the Old Enclosures themselves.

In contrast, capital's most advanced public self-understanding of the New Enclosures, with the visible collapse of the socialist models and a crisis of revolutionary "third world" Marxism, is embodied in the slogan "the End of History." This

phrase interprets the end of socialist states and parties as the annihilation of the driving contradiction of world history, and the triumph of the world market as the mark of a uniform planetary commodification called "Westernization" and "democracy." With no such "contradiction" there is no History of the grand narrative, of course. How seriously we should take this piece of State Department post-modernism is moot, but the scenario it suggests is simple. It returns the class struggle back to its pre-WWI situation and poses two choices to OECD workers: "liberalism" or "imperialism." The liberal moment accepts the "market mechanism" where we meet as different functions of the work process in a triage-like environment, so that upgrading our "survival skills" becomes the only goal in "life." The imperialist moment urges the internationalization of conquest and plunder whereby we reject competition by becoming accomplices of our immediate bosses in the direct exploitation of other proletarians, so that victory means a South African deal: better wages and a home of one's own...protected by martial law, torture cells and a gun in the handbag. More probably a disgusting mix of the two would be more palatable!

The Greening of the Deal

In the looming shadow of these bleak capitalist prospects and with the collapse of socialism, the "greens" have come forward with a global perspective calling on human aspirations transcending the market. From Earthfirst!'s "Think like a mountain" to Greenpeace's "Nuclear-free seas," the ecological movement seems to have been a major force in confronting the New Enclosures in the 1980s. "Green" militants have sabotaged deforestation, blown up power lines, aborted nuclear tests, and in general have played the "Luddites" of the New Enclosures, while "Green" parties in Europe attracted the support of many (who in a previous period would have joined the socialists or communists) by voicing political and ideological resistance to the grossest consequences of capitalist development. The "Greens" (along with their animal liberation allies) have brought some outlaw guts and angelic passion to the struggles of the last decade. But their class composition has limited their efforts up to now.

As we pointed out in "Strange Victories" (1979), the U.S. anti-nuke movement in the 1970s—which is the political root of the contemporary ecological movement—had a limited class composition. It was based on the rural population living around the nuclear plants and "an additional factor": an intellectual labor force that had relocated in the rural areas around the plants after the 1960s. We also argued then that unless the anti-nuclear movement went beyond this rather limited class composition and brought the urban and industrial proletariat into the movement, the nuclear industry would not be defeated. Energy prices were the key to expanding the class composition of the movement and so it proved. The explosion of struggles against energy price hikes in the streets and highways of the U.S. (as well as revolutions and insurrections in oil producing countries) in 1979-80 forced capital to stabilize energy prices. This sealed the doom of the U.S. nuclear industry in this century at least.

The contemporary ecology movement, however, has not learned the secret of its predecessor's "strange victories." The peculiar dialectic between rioting petroleum junkies and anti-nuke angels in 1979-80 never developed into a truly proletarian movement that could have gone beyond merely managing the environmental consequences of capitalist accumulation. Ecologists in the Reagan period returned to the self-righteous ideology of "natural consciousness," morality of "good will" and a practice of "recycling" and "stewardship" of the 1970s. This movement has all the markings of Marx and Engels' petty producers' thought and manners writ large. Even the etymology of its name has echoes of the ancient Greek aristocrat's "aikos" or "hearth and home." But just as the word "economy" surreptitiously introduces into the capitalist factory the rural patriarchal relations of father-wife-child-slave, so too "ecology" presumes that the earth is an "aikos" to be well managed instead of the terrain of global class struggle. For proletarians might be natives of the earth but we have no home here.

As a consequence of this political conservatism, the ecology movement has missed an enormous historical opportunity to once again transcend its rather limited class composition. For with the collapse of the post-WWII deal in the U.S., there is finally a chance to break the tie that bound working class wage increases in the past with the destruction of the commons. These wage increases have been definitively denied, the deal is off, but capital is still operating as if it can use our "lebensraum" for its defecations. But workers are increasingly denying capital its "right to shit." For example, an important aspect of the strike against International Paper in Jay, Maine lies in the strikers' support for an environmental ordinance that literally said to IP: if you demand total control of the production process inside the plant, we demand total control of the repro-

duction process outside the plant. This type of action is at the heart of a new possibility for a new ecology movement that would reject its angelic status and come to a proletarian earth. For if one generalized the Jay workers' tactic into a struggle that denied capital the possibility of enclosing and selectively destroying the natural commons gratis, a truly revolutionary crisis would emerge.

Such a shift in the direction of the ecology movement would be one part of a larger process which would transform the New Enclosures into a definitive occasion of proletarian unification and capitalist catastrophe. In practice this means the creation of individuals and organizations that can both think and act globally and locally which is exactly what the struggles around the New Enclosures do. The root of this result is actualized in the struggles against the New Enclosures that simultaneously reappropriate and hold *places* from capital while opening *spaces* for proletarian movement. This is why defensive localism, provincialism, nationalism and racism appear so attractive to many in the working class at the moment, for they seem to offer some protection against the most obvious sign of the New Enclosures for many in North America and Europe: the arrival of the "other" worker. But such a reaction is doomed, the more such places are sealed off by "Whites Only" signs, the more constricted the spaces of proletarian action. There are those, on the contrary, especially in the Third World and the socialist countries, who now revel in the opening of proletarian space for movement seeking to escape the most immediate consequences of the New Enclosures there, wagelessness. But if they do not create places against capital at the termini of their trajectory, they will find themselves, like the pirates of the Caribbean, continually displaced and eventually exhausted and exterminated.

The concrete task of reconstructing a new proletarian geometry is going on in such places like New York, Boston, Zurich, Jay, Maine, Beijing and Lagos. They find a place and space in this issue.

The Last Jubilee?

But can we end here with this dry hope for an abstract, almost paradoxical proletarian geometry? Have we too been infected by the post-modern anti-revolutionary malaise? This malaise is strange indeed, for with the definitive collapse of the era's three basic deals, a moment of classic revolutionary crisis opens. Yet, though at the instant of this initiation capital is most unstable, capital's fetishistic charm still seems potent. While all around us unprecedented revolutionary events unfold, postists hail the end of revolution, the end of class struggle, the end of the Grand Proletarian Narrative or, implicitly and conversely, the total triumph of capital.

It is now time at midnight for other words and spells in the magic struggle of classes. In this introduction we have reintroduced some old terms, "enclosure" and "commons." As we end let us recall another: "Jubilee." We might at first be thought slightly mad. After all, as our comrades are being hunted down, blown up, imprisoned and tortured around the globe, the very utterance of "jubilee" seems incongruous or even obscene. Is this the time for jubilation? But every struggle against enclosure and for the commons inevitably becomes a call of jubilee.

The term itself comes from the Old Testament but was revived in two central spots in the capitalist period. "Jubilee," in general, meant the abolition of slavery, the cancellation of all debt and a return of all lands to the common. It did occur periodically among ancient Mesopotamian peoples, including the Hebrews. But in the late eighteenth century the term was used in the English countryside to demand an end to enclosures while across the Atlantic African slaves used "jubilee" to demand liberation from slavery. This word thus linked the poles of trans-Atlantic struggle against capital in the pre-Marxian era. Can it do so again? Perhaps not, but the secret energies within the demand for Jubilee are far from spent. On the contrary, at this moment when the roof has been blown off all the covenants between classes, the demand to re-begin the story of humankind in common is the force that capital itself must depend upon to create a true world market. It is that force of jubilee that has led to this issue.

Down with the New Enclosures,
Time for the Last Jubilee...!

The Debt Crisis, Africa and The New Enclosures

by Silvia Federici

In that brief moment the world seemed
to stand still, waiting. There was utter silence.
The men of Umuofia were merged
into the mute backcloth of trees
and giant creepers, waiting.
The spell was broken by the head
messenger. "Let me pass!" he ordered.
"What do you want here?"
"The white man whose power you know
too well has ordered this meeting to stop."

-Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*

The international Debt Crisis can be specified as the existence of more than a trillion dollars of loans at quite steep interest rates to Third World countries, which cannot possibly pay the interest much less the principal on these loans given the present collapse of primary commodity prices and intense competition in the international trade for light manufactured goods. There have been two major perspectives in the controversy over the crisis. On the one side, the Right has viewed the crisis as potentially threatening the international banking system given the default of major Third World debtor countries On the Left the crisis is viewed as the main obstacle to Third World development. Consequently, the "solutions" have been justified on the basis of the "problems" this crisis presumably poses. The Right has seen, in the debt crisis' almost ontological threat to the money form internationally, a justification for harsh, even draconian, IMF policies aimed at making Third World countries "pay up." Meanwhile, the Left economists have not only pointed to the immense "human costs" of these IMF policies, but they also note that since these policies block the economic development of the Third World debtor countries, the debt crisis will necessarily be prolonged by the Right's solutions.

But these two opposing views do share one common assumption: the debt crisis is a threat or obstacle to capitalist development in the 1990s. For the Right, the debt crisis threatens the "stable growth" of the creditor economies, while for the Left the debt crisis is the main obstacle to the economic development of the debtor nations' economies. We disagree with this common assumption and will argue in this article that underlying the debt crisis has been a productive crisis for the capitalist classes of both the debtor and the creditor nations. The debt crisis has been

VICTIM OF ARMED ROBBERY WOUNDED FINALLY GAVE UP THE GHOST
VICTIM OF ARMED ROBBERS DIED 1984 R.I.P
BORN 1984 DIED 1984 OF MALNUTRITION R.I.P
IMF
BORN 1941 RETRENCHED 1984 DIED--1985 AT LAST R.I.P
R.I.P
VICTIM OF ARMED ROBBERS 1985 R.I.P
RETRENCHED 1984 DIED OF STARVATION 1985 R.I.P
RETRENCHED IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD 1984 DIED ON FEB 1985
R.I.P
KENN HOAMIAN

"Alright say it. I've met all your conditions. Haven't I?"

a key instrument used by capital in shifting the balance of class forces to its side on both poles of the debt relation. That is, the debt crisis has been used to resolve capital's productivity crisis.

That the debt crisis is a productive crisis for capital is nowhere as visible as in Africa. The main aim of the policies generated by the debt crisis has been to "rationalize" class relations, beginning with the most vexed question of capitalist development in Africa: who owns the land? It is an axiom of development theory that no capitalist industry can be created without a rationalized agriculture. But rationalization has not only to do with tractors and fertilizers; settling the private property relations for land tenure is infinitely more important. The debt crisis has been crucial in driving forward this "rationalization" in Africa.

Settling the Land Question

Why is the "land question" still so central in Africa? The answer is simple, though somewhat surprising to North American readers for whom the "land question" is a dimly remembered echo of nineteenth century class struggles in the "frontier." In most of Africa, communal claims to the land still live, for colonial domination failed to destroy (to a degree unmatched in any other part of the world) pre-existing communal relations, beginning with people's relation to the land. This is a factor bemoaned by leftist and rightist developers alike as the main reason for Africa's economic "backwardness." *The Economist* spelled out in a "Nigeria Survey" (May 3, 1986) how crucial "the land question" is. In a section titled "the Capitalist Flaw," we read that:

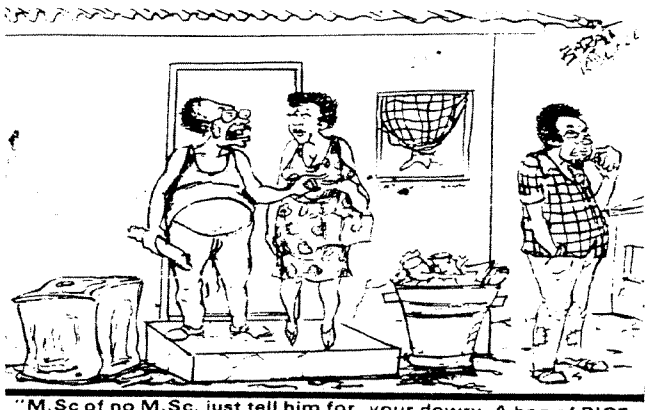
> "with two exceptions, Kenya and Zimbabwe (which) were both subjected to farming by white men under European laws of ownership and inheritance, practically everywhere in the African continent, customary land-use laws prevail, which recognize ancient, communal rights to the land."

This means that a prospective investor must negotiate with and pay to the community "for each tree, for firewood rights, for the grazing of women's goats, for grandfather's grave." This is true even in countries like Nigeria, where the state nationalized all the land in 1978. To illustrate this scandal, the survey article shows the picture of a herd of cows circulating undisturbed, side by side with a car, in the midst of a Nigerian city, cowherd, *et al.*

Predictably, *The Economist* concludes that Africa's land "must be enclosed, and traditional rights of use, access and grazing extinguished," for everywhere "it is private ownership of land that has made capital work." Land expropriation, therefore, is the precondition both for commercialized agriculture and for a wage-dependent, disciplined proletariat .

The survey forgets that land expropriation was by no means limited to settlers' economies. Moreover, the privatization of land has proceeded at an accelerated pace throughout the 1970s and 1980s, due to World Bank Agricultural Development Projects, which under the guise of "modernization" introduced not only tractors but new class ownership relations in the rural areas. The development of these new property relations was spurred by Government expropriation-drives (for infrastructural development, oil exploration, etc.), as well as a massive urbanization process. Thus these changes have had many sources, including the attempts African countries made to "develop" and the growing refusal of the new generations to spend their life "in the bush" following their parents footsteps.

Yet to this day at least 60% of the African population lives by subsistence farming, done mostly by women. Even when urbanized, many Africans expect to draw some support from the village, as the place where one may get food when on strike or unemployed, where one thinks of returning in old age, where, if one has nothing to live on, one may get some unused land to cultivate from a local chief or a plate of soup from neighbors and kin. The village is the symbol of a communal organization of life that, though under attack, has not completely disintegrated. Witness the responsibility those who move to the cities still have towards the community at home — a responsibility which easily turns into a burden, but serves to support many who otherwise would remain behind. In Nigeria, for example, villages often pull together to pay the fees to send some children to school, with the expectation that once in possession of a diploma they will in turn help people at home.



"M.Sc of no M.Sc, just tell him for your dowry, A bag of RICE, BEANS, MAIZE....."

"The village" to this day forms the reproductive basis of many African countries, particularly for the proletariat, who rarely, once urbanized, can afford the nuclear-family "life-style" that is typical among the middle class. However, among the middle class too, the nuclear family still competes with the village, which (thanks mostly to its women) refuses to be treated like an obsolescent factory. This conflict between city and village is the subject of many tales picturing overdemanding kin driving their urbanized children into corruption by their unreasonable expectations. But in reality, these "unreasonable" demands have kept pressure on the urban wage, ensuring a higher level of consumption both in village and urban centers, so that the consciousness of the cultural and material wealth produced world-wide exists in every bush.

The survival of communal ties and the lack of a tradition of wage dependence have produced many consequences in African political economy. First, it has fostered a sense of entitlements with respect to the distribution of wealth in the community and by the State. Second, it is responsibile for the fact that most African proletarians fail to experience capital's laws as natural laws, even though the demand for what industrial development can provide is now a general factor of social change.

This must be emphasised given the tendency in the US to see Africans either as a helpless victims (of government corruption or natural disasters) or as protagonists of backward struggles revolving around tribal allegiances (a myth perpetrated by the

Western media to encourage a stand-off policy with respect to people's struggles in the continent, South Africa included). In reality, from the fields to the factories, the markets and the schools, struggles are being carried on that not only are often unmatched for their combativeness by what takes place in the "First World," but are most "modern" in content . Their objective is not the preservation of a mythical past but the redefinition of what development means for the proletariat: **access to the wealth produced internationally, but not at the price capital puts on it.**

Examples of the combativeness and modernity (or even post-modernity) of African proletarians could be multiplied, ranging from the resistance to being counted (in Nigeria the idea of a census is still a government "utopia"), the resistance to tax-collection (an occupation which often calls for bodyguards), and the resistance to land expropriation (which often turns into open warfare). Even though the land has been nationalized in Nigeria, for example, negotiations are still necessary with the local chiefs before any tract of land can be appropriated by the government, and until recently compensation for trees and crops was paid. Finally, the resistance to waged work far exceeds, in terms of work-hours lost and forms of struggle, what could be expected from a waged work-force which is at most 20% of the population.

According to statistics gathered by international agencies, most people in Africa ought to be dead....

The difficulty African proletarians have in accepting capital's laws as natural laws is compounded among the new generations who have grown in a period of intense liberation struggles (Guinea Bissau in 1975, Angola and Mozambique in 1976, Zimbabwe in 1980) and see "the West" through the eyes of Soweto. This youth over the last decades has made international-capital despair of Africans' discipline and productivity

Thus, throughout the 1970s and 1980s, prior to the debt crisis, a consensus grew within international capital that Africa is a basket case and the only hope for its future lies in a drastic reduction of its population. (By "Africa," of course, all is meant except South Africa, though southern African events, from Soweto to the demise of colonialism in Angola, Mozambique and Zimbabwe, have been crucial in determining the new "mood"). On trial is "Africa's resistance to development," for Africa, we're told continually by the *Wall Street Journal*, is the only region in the world that has experienced no growth in the post-WWII period. Further, the Africans' attachment to "their traditional ways," a code word for anti-capitalist behavior, and the standard of living Africans are demanding, particularly in countries like Nigeria or Zambia, which in the 1970s (due to oil and copper prices) experienced a leap in the national wealth, must be destroyed if any form of capitalist development is to take place in Africa.

Capital has put into place a policy of planned underdevelopment in response to these "structural/political problems," with communal land claims at their core. Thus, not only has capital fled from Africa, in search of safer havens in American or Swiss Banks, but also foreign investors have dwindled to a handful (Africa in the 1970s and 1980s was the region that attracted the lowest rate of capital investment) and foreign aid and African exports have collapsed. Meanwhile the dangers of "population explosion" as a harbinger of revolution have become the gospel of the land. As a result, as former World Bank president Clausen recently put it, "Africa today is experiencing the worst depression of any world region since WWII." This means that from capital's viewpoint, Africa is the bottom of the barrel, the area where the most resistance to development is met.

To what extent capital despairs of the outcome can be seen in both the gloomy tones in which Africa is usually discussed and the disregard international capital displays with respect to the preservation of African labor. Africa is now the place for experiments on AIDS. It is the chemical/nuclear dust-bin of the world, the region where expired pharmaceutical products, or products banned in other countries, from medicines to pesticides, are dumped.

The Debt Crisis as Productive Crisis for Capital

It is within this scenario that one must understand the development of the debt crisis which, by the early 1980s, affected more than 25 African countries.

It is difficult to measure to what extent the escalation of the debt has been due to the pressure exercised by proletarian demands, which in the 1970s forced African governments to borrow money from foreign banks, or was engineered by international capital to force African governments to implement policy reforms. What is certain is that the debt crisis has provided national and international capital with a golden opportunity to attempt a wide-ranging reorganization of class relations, aimed at cheapening the cost of labor, raising social productivity, reversing "social expectations" and opening the continent to a fuller penetration of capitalist relations, having the capitalist use of the land as its basis.

As in other Third World areas, the crisis in Africa has unfolded through two different phases, each differentiated by more or less direct intervention of foreign governments through the role played by international agencies. There has been, in fact, a division of labor between the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB), corresponding not so much to the need to integrate "soft cop/hard cop" policies, as to the requirement to deal with different levels of proletarian resistance, the key factor in the dialectic of development and repression. Phase I, roughly lasting from 1980 to 1984, was dominated by the IMF "monetarist policies." This was the phase when, as country after country defaulted on interest payments, arrangements were made with the IMF for stand-by loans in exchange for the infamous IMF conditionalities: cuts in subsidies to products and programs, wage freeze, retrenchment in public sector and massive devaluations, which in many cases virtually demonetarized the economy. But by 1984 such was the resistance to further austerity measures and the hatred for the IMF that a new strategy had to be devised, accompanied by a change of the guard in the form of a World Bank takeover. Thus Phase II, which began in 1984, took the form of World Bank "development."

The World Bank is an old acquaintance of the African continent, where in the post-independence period it rushed to replace

the departing colonial administrators. In the 1980s, it has played capital's grey eminence in Africa. Hardly a plan or a deal has been made without its intervention, in the capacity of lender, advisor or controller. In 1984, the World Bank announced it would raise $1 billion to provide 50 "soft loans" to sub-Saharan nations prepared to accept its recipe for "economic recovery" and embark on the path of economic reforms. This "special facility for Africa," which under the name of "Structural Adjustment Program" (SAP) was the model for the Baker Plan presented at Seoul in 1985, emerged as the vehicle for the much hailed conversion to a free-market economy undergone by many African countries since 1985.

SAP, in fact, is Reaganite laissez-faireism applied to the Third World. Its essential model is Milton Friedman's formula for post-Allende Chile that demands the removal of all measures protecting the standard of living of workers and forces workers to survive only to the extent that they work in conditions competitive with those of other workers worldwide. Hence, wage levels are decided by international labor market considerations combined with state repression to ensure that wages never rise to "international levels."

SAPs require much repression. In Chile, its implementation cost the lives of 30,000 workers, butchered in homage to the new market freedom. SAP means that in exchange for "growth-oriented" loans, a country accepts the liberalization of imports, the privatization of state industries, the abolition of all restrictions on currency exchange and commodity prices, the demise of any subsidy program, and further devaluations, with the loans financing these programs and setting up export-oriented agricultural and industrial sectors. In the rhetoric of business and the World Bank, once the prices of commodities, services and labor are allowed to "adjust to their market value" and imported commodities are once again available in the markets, everyone will be incentivized to produce more, foreign investment will flow, exports will grow, earning solid hard currency, and recovery will be finally at hand. But SAP means that millions of Africans, whose monthly wages average at best $30 a month, are asked to pay American-type prices for commodities and services. Even the local food prices reach prohibitive levels as the land is increasingly cultivated with crops not destined for local consumption.

SAP, in fact, is the vehicle for the integration of the African proletariat into the world market, but along lines not dissimilar from those of colonial times, as they are expected to produce crops they won't be able to consume, and pay for what they buy at the international price levels, at the very time when their wages not only have vanished because of retrenchment but have become meaningless in the face of astronomical devaluations. The integration of the African proletariat into the world market via SAP is visible also at the level of the new bosses: with the new productivity campaign, all attempts at "indigenization" have been dropped and expatriate managers and technicians are flocking back, as in the good old colonial days. The hope is that white masters will be more effective in making people work than were their African counterparts.

As the key managers of this new turn have been foreign agencies (IMF, World Bank, Paris Club, London Club, in addition to the commercial banks), the measures adopted have appeared as another chapter in neo-colonial relations, with Western banks and agencies replacing the colonial powers in their imperial role. This "appearance" is not unfounded. Once in the grip of IMF & Co., a country loses any semblance of economic/political independence: IMF representatives sit on the board of the Central Bank, no major economic project can be carried on without their approval, storms of foreign officers periodically descend on it to check account books, and no government could steer a politically independent path, even if it wanted to, since every few months it must plead with foreign agencies for debt rescheduling or new loans.

ANGUARD, WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 30, 1985

"Ladies and gentlemen, Introducing the most successful "BUSINESS MEN" of all time!"

The case of Liberia, which a few years ago asked Washington to send a team of managers to run its economy, is but an extreme example of what today is happening in most of Africa. Equally telling are the overtures African governments (e.g., Cameroon, Ivory Coast, Nigeria) are presently making to Israel and South Africa, with whom, for a long time, caution advised secret relations. Thus, there is a sense in which it is possible to speak of *the recolonization of Africa*, under the hegemony of Western powers, who are using the crisis to recuperate what was lost in the wake of the anti-colonial struggles.

All this should not hide the fact that both the crisis and the help from abroad have been welcomed by the dominant sectors of the African ruling class. For they have in turn used the external debt to free themselves from the concessions to "their people" they were forced to make in the aftermath of independence and to stem the militancy of the new generations. Undoubtedly African leaders have had to swallow a few bitter morsels. For the African ruling class today, integration with international capital is a different deal from the one they struck in the post-independence period. It was then confronting a less unified capitalist front (with the U.S. competing with the old colonial powers and the Soviet Union in Africa); today the main branches of international capital are integrated. Thus, the nationalistic games

African leaders were able to play—publicly boasting non-alignment and pan-Africanism while dealing behind doors with South Africa (as in the case of Nigeria) and taking money from "East" and "West"—are no longer possible. Nor is it possible for them to continue to oscillate between the Scylla of a demagogic socialism and the Charybdis of a waste of capital funds for visibly unproductive purposes.

The African leaders too have been brought to trial. The golden mouthpieces of international capital have accused them of a personalistic attachment to capital (the famous "corruption" charge) and lack of managerial skills. But the chastisement has been acknowledged as useful in most quarters. The debt crisis has been a "consciousness raising" process for African leaders, who have learnt they cannot rule without the help of Washington, London and Paris, showing in face of the "crisis" the fundamental similarities of their political stands, regardless of how much socialist rhetoric they flaunt. This is why they so easily bend to the demands of foreign capital. It is not because of their helplessness in front of Washington and London, but because of their helplessness in front of the African people. Not accidentally, with the brief exception of Tanzania under Nyerere, nowhere has an African government attempted to mobilize the population that would have eagerly responded to the call for default. On the contrary, they have "passed along" the most murderous austerity policies, diverting substantial amounts of presumably scarce foreign currency to buttress their armies and police forces with the latest anti-riot equipment while playing helpless before the IMF. The debt crisis has unambiguously shown that to maintain their rule African governments must depend on the support of Washington, London and Paris.

Thus, one of the main results of the debt crisis is the reorganization of the mechanism of capitalist command, beginning with the unification of "metropolitan" and "peripheral" capital. Such has been the willingness of African leaders to comply with international capital—often implementing austerity measures stiffer than those required by WB/IMF—that a number of African countries (e.g., Morocco, Ghana, and Nigeria) are becoming a show-piece for multinational agencies. The turning point came in the Spring of 1986, when the Organization of African Unity (OAU) decided to bring Africa's debt problem to the UN, asking Western countries to help solve it. By this time almost every country in the continent was defaulting on its interest payments and many countries were devoting 30 to 40% of their budget to debt servicing— a percentage leftist economists consider a recipe for economic disaster.

This unprecedented move was a decisive ideological victory for the Western Powers who, after decades of anti-imperialist rhethoric, felt vindicated in their pre-independence misgivings ("we told you that you were not ready!"). At the special UN session, by defeating a resolution pointing to their responsibility in the African crisis, they made it clear they would no longer hear about how colonialism pauperised Africa. Indeed, it is now accepted wisdom in the U.S. media that colonialism bears no responsibility for what's happening today in Africa.

The 1986 UN session was the Canossa of African Governments. At it they publicly recognized that by themselves they are unable to rule the continent. It served as the occasion for old and new colonial powers (like Japan) to return to the saddle. Shultz's triumphal trip through Africa in June 1986 and the murder, one year later, of Sankara of Burkina Faso, the living symbol of African anti-imperialism, sealed the deal.

Since then, the "debt crisis" has unfolded in Africa in all its mathematical logic, showing how misleading it is to view it as a numerical crisis, as it is usually presented. The fallacy of the numerical approach is to believe that from capital's viewpoint "economic recovery" is equal to "debt reduction." If this were the case, much of what is happening around the debt would be incomprehensible. For in most countries, the debt has escalated dramatically since their acceptance of IMF-World Bank economic recovery measures (e.g., the Nigerian debt rose from $20 to $30 billion after a SAP was introduced). The reason for this apparently paradoxical result is simple. The debt crisis is determined not by the larger or smaller amount of the debt due or paid up, but by the processes activated through it: wage freezes, the collapse of any local industry not connected to foreign capital

'Congratulations, but we don't feel it.'

(which provides the hard currency needed for technology and capital investment), the banning of unions, the end of free education even at the primary level, the imposition of draconian laws making labor and other social struggles an act of economic sabotage, the banning of militant students' organizations, and especially the privatization of land. This function of the debt crisis is best seen perhaps in the well-financed escalation of repression in the debtor countries. The latest technological tools of repression (cars, walkie-talkies, Israeli security guards) have arrived in Africa in the wake of the debt crisis. "Defense" spending is the only type of spending international agencies have not begrudged African governments, though they count every penny when it comes to health or education. "Crisis" here becomes, on capital's part, a misnomer: it is a crisis, rather, for the working class.

What this has meant for people can be seen by looking at Ghana, an IMF "success story," from the viewpoint of the extensiveness of the trade liberalization allowed and the present growth rate. But since 1983, when Ghana decided to comply with the IMF, the national currency, the cedi, has collapsed nearly 100% in value. As a result, with the banknotes people are paid in being so worthless, the majority of the Ghanaians have been practically demonetarized. Unions, however, have been sufficiently intimidated (thanks to Jerry Rawlings' past "man-of-the-people" aura) as to subscribe to the plan and keep workers from striking. Thus, by international capital's initiative, Ghanaians have been forced to leap beyond the money-relation; e.g., the monthly salary of a middle-level civil servant hardly pays for one third of the family monthly food bill. But as long as people must pay for food, transport and rent, this means that their lives must be a constant wheeling and dealing which today consumes all their energies. (In the long run, though, the experience of having to invent daily new means of reproduction may produce some unexpected results.)

Presently many in Ghana, for example, hold on to a waged job only in the hope of "chopping for the work-side," i.e. using the facilities and utilities the work-place provides for reproduction not production. Wage or no wage, ekeing out a living is an endless struggle, with prostitution, touting to tourists, subsistence farming and remittances from abroad being (for most) the only alternatives to starving or thieving. Meanwhile over the last four years two million Ghanaians, almost 20% of the Ghanaian population, have emigrated to Italy, Iceland, Australia, and many others are on the way out. They are called the "road-people," planetary transients, often thrown overboard from ships they illegally boarded, going from port to port in search of a country that will let them in, ready to work in any conditions since a few dollars earned selling watches or bags in New York can support a family in Accra or Dakar. The flight from all of Africa is so massive that it has turned into a job of its own, with people specializing in how to circumvent the restrictions foreign embassies place on visas.

Everywhere, from Nigeria to Tanzania, a new diaspora is at work, sending millions to work in Europe and the U. S. This diaspora is a gold-mine for European and American capital, which still relishes the basic principle of the old slave-trade: people are more productive once uprooted from their homes. The number and status of the emigrants are documented by World Bank demographers, who, with Nazi-like scientific precision, also periodically record what countries fall below the caloric requirements for work or "just" survival. For hunger is reappearing in surprising places like Nigeria, traditionally the yam basket of Africa, even in times of bumper crops. Not only is meat disappearing, gari (cassava flour), traditionally the cheapest and most basic staple, is becoming unaffordable, at least in the urban centers, where it must be transported by trucks and vans fueled with gasoline costing now what whisky cost in the past.

At the heart of the debt crisis agenda, then, is the annihilation of the old African system of reproduction of labor power and struggle based upon the village and its tenure of the commons.

The debt crisis is almost a textbook case of the old-time truth that economic liberalism not only is compatible with, but at crucial times requires social fascism.

The aim of the IMF and the World Bank is to make both the land and the people truly available for work, i.e., for wages and rent. To do this, capital had to pierce the veil of its own statistical "money illusion." For according to the statistics gathered by international agencies, most people in Africa ought to be dead, since their per capita income is far below subsistence. But they are not dead. On the contrary, Africa is one of the liveliest places on the planet. The main reason for this contradiction is the immense subsistence productivity of the African commons. The debt crisis is capital's methodical attempt to destroy this productivity of life and substitute a productivity of surplus value.

The first phase of the debt crisis—the demonetarization of African economies and the default of post-colonial states—destroyed this money illusion. The message of the demonetarization to the average African was that s/he was capitalistically dead and that the time for living in the interstices between the international market and the village commune was definitively over. The bankruptcy of the post-colonial states made it clear that no intermediary would be able to soften the impact of the laws of

capital. The famines of 1984-5 made the point with brutal terror throughout Africa. The second or SAP phase of the debt crisis was (and is) the moment of enclosure. For the essence of SAP is the capitalization of the land, i.e. either local farmers or miners employ the land for the national or international market or the land will be taken by those who will—or, as in many areas, both. If SAPs succeed, the myth and reality of "Mother Africa" is finished.

New Social Struggles

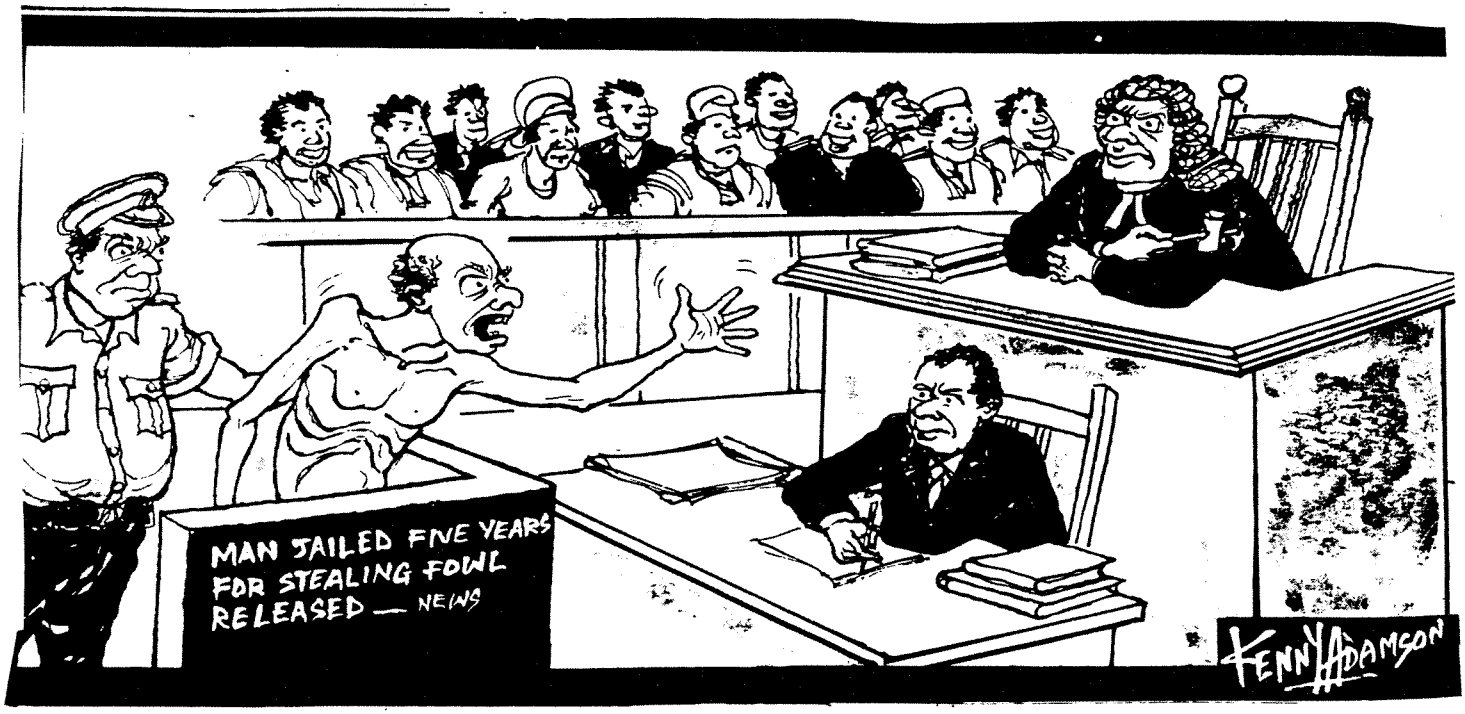
The debt crisis in fact is almost a textbook case of the old-time truth that economic liberalism not only is compatible with, but at crucial times requires social fascism. Thus the Chilean road to economic recovery is today applied to most of liberalized, structurally adjusted Africa. The Chilean recipe has almost been learned by rote: students' organizations must be banned, unions must be intimidated and driven underground, security forces must be remodeled (usually with the help of shadowy U.S.-British-French-Israeli advisors). The new legislation is also now standard. For example, in Nigeria we have Decree 20 against "economic sabotage"—including strikes at oil sites (establishing a death penalty for such saboteurs)— and Decree 2 establishing preventive detention for up to six months. Increasingly, capital punishment has been used as a weapon in the "war against armed robbery," the Nigerian/African equivalent of "the war against drugs." As for the spaces left to "freedom of speech," let us just mention the case of Nigeria, where even seminars on SAP attended by Nobel Prize winners like Soyinka are nowadays met with armed policemen at the doors.

But none of these measures have put an end to the resistance against the "economic recovery measures." The first major failure of IMF policies appeared in Zambia in December of 1986, a few months after the UN conference on Africa. The Zambian government, amid Kenneth Kaunda's tears, had to turn its back on the IMF following massive anti-IMF, anti-austerity riots in Northern Zambia—the heart of the copper fields. What happened was that after another round of price increases and a further devaluation of the kwacha, people engaged in the most violent protests since independence. The government had to call in army combat units and seal off the borders. The riot was sparked by the announcement that the government was going to double the price of maize meal (as demanded by the IMF). Housewives, youth and the unemployed took to the streets, attacking warehouses where the maize was stored, and soon every other store became a target. The crowd appropriated TVs, stereos and even cars, stoned policemen, attacked government offices and burned down (in Kalulushi) the Presidential Headquarters (hence Kaunda's tears). Ten people were reportedly killed in the many days of rioting, but in the end the government had to reduce the maize prices and tell the IMF it could no longer comply.

Equally violent and continuous has been the resistance in Nigeria. From the earliest phase of the government's negotiations with the IMF, students, market women and workers have gone to the street protesting the end of free education, tax-certificate requirements for school children enrolled in primary schools, wage freezes, new levies, and the removal of subsidies for domestically sold petroleum.

The involvement of students in riots in Zambia and Nigeria is not unique. All over Africa students have been at the forefront of the anti-SAP protest. Despite the fact that they are a privileged minority, often being ready after graduation to compromise their political convictions for a government job, students in many African countries are now forced, by the objective conditions of IMF-education planning for Africa, to take a more radical stand (The IMF prescribes a drastic reduction in the number of high-school and college graduates in order to contain wages and reduce expectations). Thus the IMF inspired SAPs are the death pill of the post-independence "social contract" which promised a

SUNDAY VANGUARD, OCTOBER 27, 1985



"Alright, I've learnt my lesson. Next time I'll loot the treasury!"

piece of the pie to those who had a high school or university degree. As a result, a pervasive high unemployment rate among graduates has followed the introduction of SAPs. Many university trained engineers are lucky if they manage to drive a cab. In this context, it is not an accident that every step in the escalation of IMF-imposed economic austerity measures has been accompanied by an attack on students and students' organizations.

A good example of this sort of violent confrontation occured on May 26, 1986. In the wake of a peaceful demonstration at Ahmadu Bello University in Zaria, Nigeria, and one week prior to the arrival of IMF-World Bank officers in Lagos, who were to check Nigeria's books and economic plans, truckloads of Mobile Policemen invaded the campus, shooting students and visitors at sight. The machine-gun firing police chased the students into the dorms, where scores were later found wounded or dead, and into the surrounding village houses where they had tried to take refuge. More than 40 were killed and many more were wounded. The massacre did not stop the protests however. In the following days, riots exploded all over the country. Students in Lagos, Ibadan and other campuses blocked the streets, attacked government buildings and prisons (excarcerating hundreds of prisoners, including some from death row), and vandalized the premises of those newspapers which had ignored the protest.

Since then, anti-SAP riots have become endemic in Nigeria, culminating in May and June of 1989 with new uprisings in the main southern cities, Lagos, Bendel, Port-Harcourt. Once again, crowds of students, women and the unemployed jointly confronted the police and burned many government buildings to the ground. In Bendel, the prison was ransacked, hundreds of prisoners were set free, and food was confiscated in the prison pantry and later distributed to the hospitals, where patients notoriously starve unless they can provide their own food. More than 400 people reportedly were killed in Nigeria in the days of Tiananmen Square, though barely a word about the riots and massacres could be found in the US media.

Nigeria has not been alone. Anti-IMF protests have occurred in Zaire, where in December 1988 a crowd of women was machine gunned by Government troops. In February of 1989 at the University in Kinshasa, scores of students and teachers were killed or wounded following protests against the IMF-inspired rise of transport prices, which had led the students to take over a government bus. In Ghana too, student-government confrontation has been the order of the day since the implementation of the IMF deal.

Massive uprisings and insurrections are but one part of the resistance against austerity and SAP plans. A daily warfare is fought at the motor parks against the hike of transport prices, at the "bukas" where people insist on a piece of meat in their soup without having to pay the extra price, and at the markets where people defy government attempts to ban "illegal" (non-tax-paying) vendors. Along with this quasi-legal micro-struggle against the IMF policies and their results, armed robbery, smuggling, and land-wars have exploded in response to diminishing access to land due to SAP inspired enclosures. These struggles have not been in vain. The recent decision at the Paris summit of the OECD (held during the bicentennial of the storming of the Bastille) to cancel a part of the African debt for those countries that implemented SAPs (up to 50% for the "poorest" of them) is a recognition of their power.

Jubilees, Moratoriums and the End of the Debt Crisis

In conclusion, we have shown that the Left and Right analyses of the Debt Crisis are inadequate to the task: charting the dynamics of the crisis and determining its end. The Debt Crisis constitutes a tissue of monetary facts and problems of accumulation for both these poles of analysis and practice. They cannot explain why the crisis appeared as it did and why it has developed into a chronic aspect of contemporary capitalism. Most fundamentally, they cannot give us a clear account of the end of the Debt crisis, for the two acts that would definitively cut the Gordian Knot of the crisis—either a debt jubilee (called by a debtors' cartel) or a lending moratorium (called by a creditors' cartel)—are capitalistic absurdities. Ultimately, the reason for the failure of these analyses is that they do not point out that the object of the Debt Crisis is not the official debtors (the Third World nations, banks and corporations) but those who fall outside of the credit system in the first place: the proletariat. This analytic failure is most clear in Africa where the very idea that a worker, say, in rural Kano province in Nigeria is in debt to the IMF is patently absurd. Once one views the Debt Crisis as directed at the non-debtor it becomes clear why the crisis has become chronic, despite the manipulation of a Brady or a Baker. No one of the capitalist class, in or out of Africa, wants to end the Debt Crisis in Africa. Rather, the idea is to manage it. For debt is doing its job as part of the credit system, which is supposed to "accelerate the material development of the productive forces and the establishment of the world market."

Yet the Debt Crisis is a most dangerous way to proceed, since the way of debt makes capital vulnerable to the proletariat on two basic counts. First, debt, by being capital's way of connecting past labor with future expropriation of surplus labor, makes working class repudiation of debt not only a financial catastrophe but also a severing of the ontological link between capital's past and its future. Second, the internationalization of the Debt Crisis and the vehicles of its productive management also opens up planetary circuits of struggle which increasingly will include Eastern Europe, the USSR and China. Consequently, the possibility of a new level of material solidarity within the international proletariat is realized inadverently. The swindle of the Debt Crisis can therefore be turned into the "disintergration of the old mode of production" it was once predicted to be by an old Moorish debtor.

References

For a recent Leftist analyis of the Debt Crisis see Susan George, *A Fate Worse Than Debt* (New York: Grove Press, 1988) and the Debt Crisis Network's material. The address of the DCN is 1901 Q St. NW, Washington, DC 20009.

For a Rightist analysis of the Debt Crisis see the annual reports of the IMF and the World Bank. The IMF's address is 700 19th St. NW, Washington, DC, 20431.

The quotations in the last section of the piece are from Karl Marx, *Capital*, Vol. III, chapter XXVII, "The Role of Credit in Capitalist Production" (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1966).

For a discussion of the "ontological link" money and credit supply for capital, see C. George Caffentzis, *Clipped Coins, Abused Words and Civil Government: John Locke's Philosophy of Money* (New York: Autonomedia, 1989).

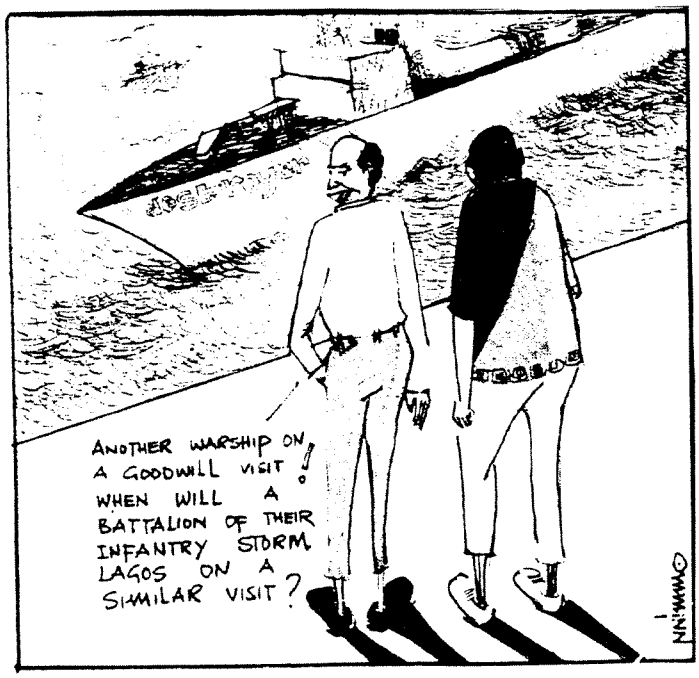
Notes on the Origin of The Debt Crisis

by
Harry Cleaver, Jr.

Analyzing the emergence of the debt crisis requires discovering how financial problems constitute parts of the evolving structure of class relations—a process which involves situating the fetishized world of money and finance as moments of class struggle. On the surface, the debt crisis is a purely monetary and financial problem: how to manage international flows of capital so that the debtors of the Third and Second Worlds can repay their debts. Thus, the current literature on the debt crisis deals primarily with issues of liquidity vs. solvency, the relations between private bank loans and official, especially IMF, sanctions; conditions of debt rescheduling and internal policy changes in the debtor countries.[1]

But understanding these problems of liquidity, debt financing and adjustment in class terms requires analyzing prior phenomena, both rooted in the changing structure of global class relations from about 1970 to the explosion of the debt crisis in 1982.

The onset of the crisis is to be found in an international cycle of working class struggle which swept around the world in the second half of the 1960s, rupturing capital's global order—West and East, North and South. That international cycle of struggles, which escaped capital's ability to manage and plunged the Keynesian era into a crisis to which capital has yet to discover an adequate response, included rebellion both in production and reproduction. In the United States, the civil rights and black power movements, the Chicano and Native American movements, the urban insurgencies that burned Watts, Newark, Detroit and other central cities, the student and anti-war movements, a wage offensive that ruptured the post-WWII productivity deals in the factories, and increasingly, the women's movement. In the Third World: new insurgencies in South East Asia, South Asia, Latin America, and the last anti-colonial struggles in Africa. In Western Europe: May 1968 in France, the revolt of Italian factory workers and students that led to Italy's "hot autumn" of 1969, and an upsurge in the struggles of immigrant workers throughout Northern Europe. In Eastern Europe: a spreading insurgency that erupted from Prague's "spring" to the Polish worker riots of 1970. In the USSR and China: growing resistance to state-organized exploitation that can be traced from the Moscow food riots in 1962 through the "Cultural Revolution" to the sympathy strikes of Soviet workers at the time of the Polish upheavals. Not only did all these conflicts occur in the same period, but they were often directly linked, as in the case of the circulation of rebellion from the rice paddies and jungles of South East Asia to U.S. campuses, and in the circulation of insubordination from the ghettoes of U.S. central cities to its factories.



The first economic signs of the extent and seriousness of the damage inflicted on the Keynesian order by these struggles included, at the national level, accelerating inflation, a growing productivity crisis, a decline in average corporate profit rates, and unmanageable government budget deficits; at the international level, there were growing difficulties with trade balances, exchange rate instability, and speculative capital outflows culminating in the U.S. abandonment of the Bretton Woods system of fixed exchange rates in 1971. The change from fixed to floating rates which took place between 1971 and 1973 constituted a de facto admission on the part of national governments that they no longer had the power to manage accumulation internally in ways compatible with global accumulation. This change also constituted a deft shift of terrain on capital's part from the concrete worlds of production and reproduction to the abstract and fetishized world of money, apparently taking the struggle from the city streets, factories, college campuses and rice paddies to the obscure back rooms of central banks and distant markets for foreign exchange.

This shift set the stage for the debt crisis. But in order to understand its origin the following three questions must be an-

swered: (a) what were the reasons for the heavy borrowing in the 1970s? (b) how did such large quantities of capital become available for loans simultaneously? (c) what triggered the global recession and the high interest rates of the end of the 1970s and early 1980s which made the debt crisis inevitable?

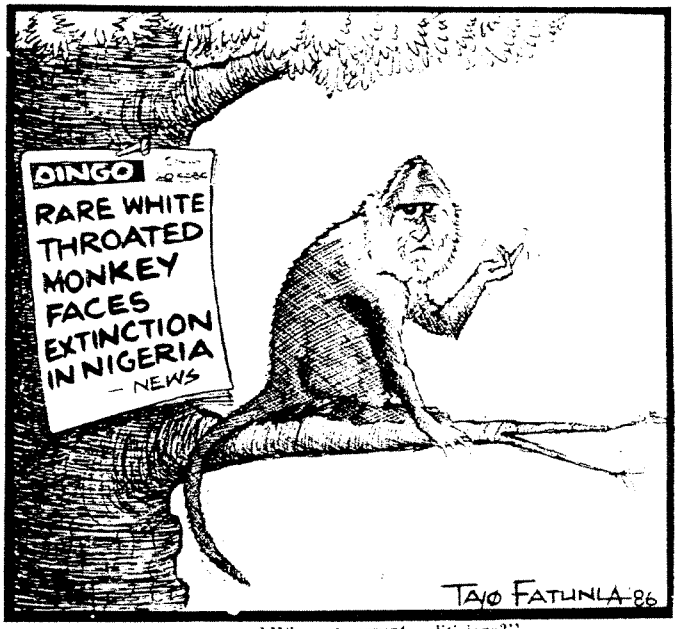
First, what were the reasons for the heavy borrowing? A complete answer to this question obviously requires a detailed analysis on a case-by-case basis of the class struggle in each of the "debtor countries" and of why the actual debtors (capitalists, elected officials and generals) were willing to borrow enormous sums from their foreign counterparts. Although such an analysis is beyond the scope of these notes, nevertheless I think we can give something of a general characterization of this borrowing. In most cases, the local administrators of capital wanted to use the borrowed funds to finance both their short-run response to local struggles, especially military/police control of the working class, and their longer-run response, local industrialization with all of its attendant costs including substantial infrastructure investment.[2]

In the three largest debtor countries—Mexico, Brazil and Argentina—such development investment was clearly predicated on the political repression of local struggles. The imposition of military rule in Brazil in 1964 came as a response to an upsurge in workers demands; the background of Mexican borrowing included the massacre of students in 1968 and widespread repression of peasant land seizures in the late 1960s; the military in Argentina sought to build factories on the unmarked graves of some 30,000 murdered insurgents. The borrowed money was a weapon in the re-establishment of accumulation after intense moments of struggle, for it was brought in with the hope of turning it into capital by exploiting what were, at least temporarily, stabilized populations of workers. [3]

In other parts of the Third World, such as the Sahel, where the working class was weaker and "nature" provided capital with alternative weapons, the response to struggle was not "development" but underdevelopment as drought was turned into famine and starvation was wielded against insurgent nomadic populations. In those countries, borrowing for productive investment was a secondary response to popular resistance to capital (Cleaver, 1977).

In Eastern Europe, especially in Poland and Hungary, the heavy borrowing came after the failure to generate local surpluses and investment adequate to meet the growing demands of the working class. The violent rejection by the Polish people in December 1970 of government attempts to shift resources from consumption to investment by cutting food subsidies caused reverberations throughout Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. With direct attacks on working class consumption ruled out by the level of militancy and organization, socialist managers were forced to resort increasingly to borrowed capital to finance the industrial restructuring they needed to meet local demands and to regain control over accumulation. This was by no means the only response - the Soviets, for example, faced with poor harvests in 1972, also concluded the largest grain pact in history with U.S. grain companies to immediately increase food availability in the Soviet Union—but it was a common and important one. When violence erupted again in Poland in 1976, this process was accelerated, and even the Soviet government revised their 1976-1980 five-year plan to increase the production of consumption goods (Cleaver, 1977).

Second, how did large amounts of loanable capital become available in the 1970s? The superficial answer to this is well known: the bulk of the capital loaned during this period came from the Eurodollar market, at first from deposits that found no takers in crisis-fraught Western Europe and then from the enormous dollar surpluses generated by the OPEC countries through their nationalizations and quadrupling of the price of crude oil in 1974. While part of these surpluses were used to import the goods required for development at home, the largest part of it, which exceeded their "absorptive capacity" in the short term, was deposited in Western financial institutions, especially U.S. banks. Those banks then found themselves with huge new resources available for loans—loans which were both desired and needed.

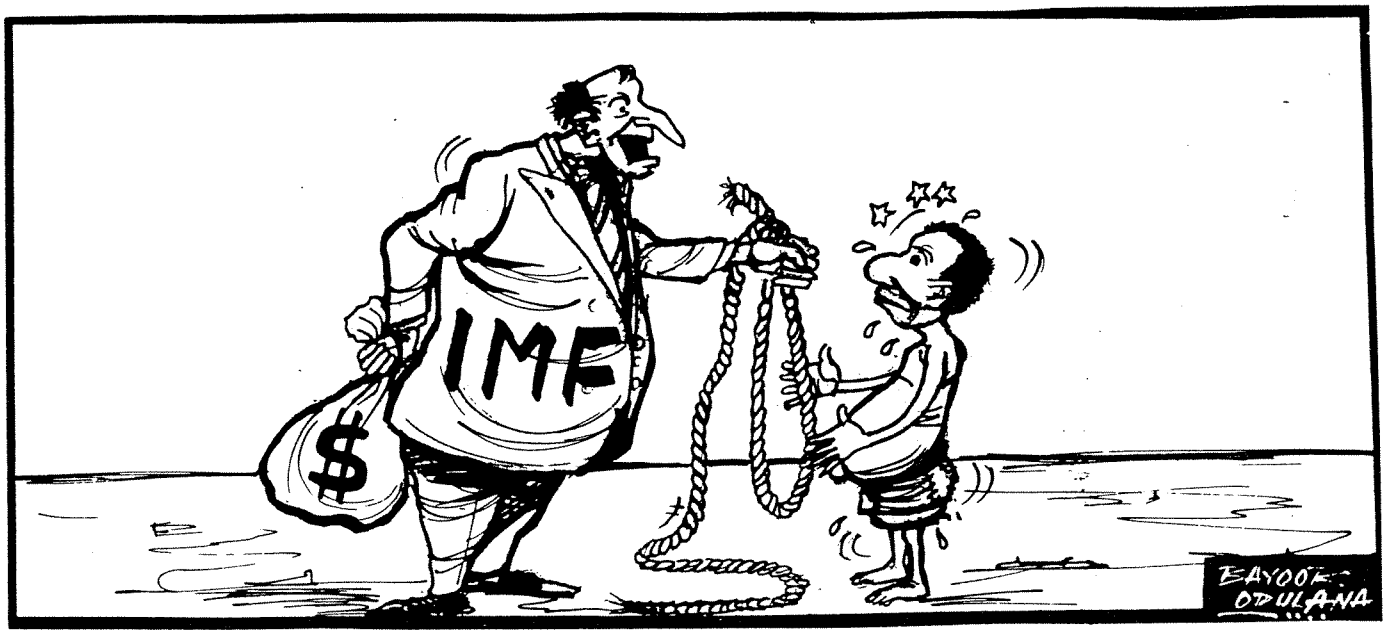


"Why me...? Why not corrupt politicians?"

But while this story is well known, let us look below the surface of this dollar flow. To do this we must first and foremost recognize that the rise of OPEC and extraction of petrodollars from the rest of the world was not simply an affair of nation-state competition, either among OPEC nations or between OPEC nations and "oil importing countries."

In the first place, the motivation of the OPEC governments was not simply greed, as it was popularly depicted in the Western media, nor even was it the justified demand for reparations for decades of exploitation, as some of their apologists have argued.[4] Rather, the need for control over oil production, higher oil prices and balance of payments surpluses was dictated by the growing, uncontainable demands of the workers and peasants of those countries. To show this clearly would require a detailed examination of each case; I will only sketch a couple of examples here.

The most obvious case, and one central to the story of the debt crisis, is Iran, whose government under the Shah at that time was attempting to carry out two simultaneous projects: developing an industrial economy at home and becoming a major military power in the region. Both were costly and both were reflections of popular struggles in the area. With respect to indus-



"The rope first,... then the loan. It's either you CLIMB with it or HANG".

trial development, the situation in Iran was similar to that in Latin American debtor countries—rising popular demands were met by a combination of police-state repression and social investment. The Iranian counterpart of the Brazilian "miracle" of accumulation based on military repression was the image of the Modernizing Shah who undertook a vast project of nation building backed by the torture chambers of Savak, the secret police. [5] Certainly the region's armed and volatile struggles, epitomized by the Palestinians, should make the class roots of his military project obvious.

A second example of OPEC motivation, taken from outside the Middle East, is that of Nigeria in West Africa. The history of Nigeria since decolonization is one of constant battle between the efforts of its neo-colonial governments to go on managing the structure of exploitation put into place by the British and the struggles of its workers and peasants to escape or reduce that exploitation. Time after time, the Nigerian government responded to popular demands by formulating multi-year development plans of accumulation only to see each one of them in turn undermined by popular resistance and upheaval. The culmination of one such cycle of struggle was the Nigerian civil war from 1967 to 1970. It involved a terrible cost for substantial sectors of the working class (especially in "Biafra"), but it eventually was followed by the reemergence of class conflict. With a tradition inherited from the British of buying cheaply from Nigerian producers and selling at higher prices in world markets, the Nigerian government saw in OPEC and high oil prices a vital new source of capital to impose its development plans on both peasants and workers. It needed those external resources to restructure class relations at home in such a manner that more surplus value could be generated internally with less dependence on both volatile world markets and the workers who produced for them. [6]

To sum up this part of the argument: the immediate source of the loan capital which financed the build up of debt derived from OPEC government responses to the struggles of people in their own countries and regions.

At the same time, we also know that the original source of the OPEC surpluses was the consumption income of workers in the oil importing countries as the higher prices for crude oil were passed on by capital to the final prices of everything from gasoline to football helmets. Why did Western policy makers allow OPEC to carry out this gigantic process of surplus value transferral to the oil exporting countries? We know from past Western intervention in the Middle East that Western governments have never felt helpless or reluctant to influence the evolution of politics either in the region or in particular countries. We also know now, from those who were involved, that despite the official condemnation of the "extortionary" quadrupling of oil prices, and Kissinger's sending of the Marines into the Mohave to practice intervention in desert regions, that the U.S. negotiators quietly let the OPEC countries know that the U.S. government would not oppose oil price increases (Oppenheim, 1976-1977). Why did those policy makers look upon those increases with such tolerance?

U.S. policy makers saw a great opportunity in the OPEC price increases. That opportunity lay in the combination of a reduction of working class income in the U.S., through further price increases, and the necessary recycling of the petrodollars which would make them available for capital investment. This investment was widely understood to be necessary in undercutting working class power and restoring productivity. The Western tolerance for OPEC stemmed, at least in part, from a vision as to how OPEC could be used as a financial intermediary to transfer value from Western consumers to Western capital—something that Keynesian management had failed to accomplish.[7] The emergence of the petrodollar surpluses which would fuel the debt crisis can thus be seen to have been a worked out compromise among various national managers of capital seeking to deal with working class insurgency in both the oil exporting and oil importing countries.

The success of this project depended on the ability of capital to convert higher oil prices into a reduction in the real wage, i.e., in holding nominal wage increases below oil boosted inflation. In

terms of international trade accounts, this would translate into reductions in consumption imports to offset the higher costs of oil imports. As we now know, despite the global recession of 1974-75 and the substantially increased unemployment, this strategy failed to a considerable degree. Faced with the joint assault of higher unemployment and accelerated inflation on their standard of living, workers in the U.S. (on the average) were able to mobilize the power necessary to force increases in nominal wages enough to offset the additional inflation.[8] This had the effect of further undermining the profitability of investment in the U.S. while increasing non-oil imports. Consequently, the propensity to use the surplus capital as investment in the U.S. was reduced and more funds became available for loans to socialist and Third World countries.

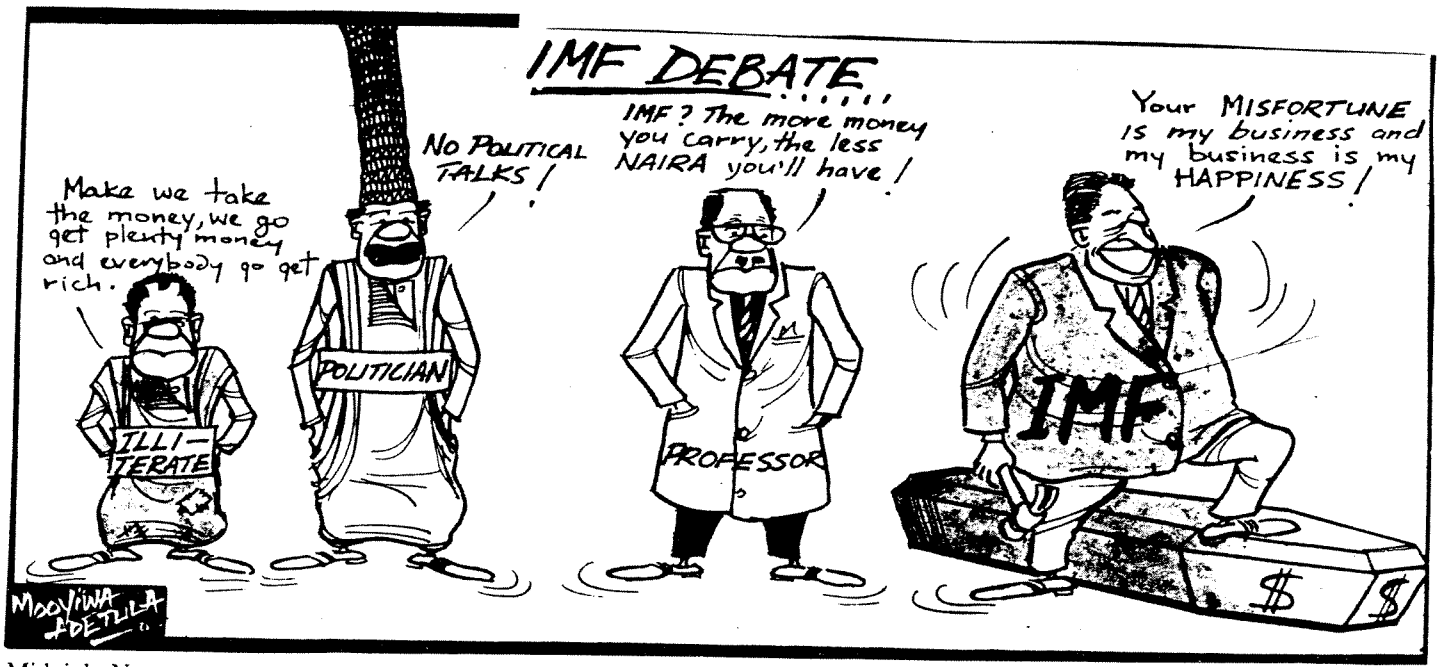
The third essential question concerning the origin of the debt crisis is, "What is the source of the global recession that undermined the debtors' ability to earn foreign exchange and caused the rise in interest rates which dramatically raised the cost of debt?" Once again the answer must be found in the changing patterns of class conflict.

The anti-inflationary shift in U.S. monetary policies managed by Federal Reserve Bank Chairman Volcker triggered the recession and the interest rate hikes. But why did U.S. monetary policy change? Throughout the 1970s "anti-inflationary policy" was aimed at wage reduction or control, but all such efforts failed. Therefore, by the end of the 1970s many capitalist planning agencies, most notably the IMF, called in increasingly urgent and strident terms for a globally coordinated attack on inflation that would include not only tight money but also demand reduction measures (e.g., cuts in social welfare expenditures) and the breaking of "structural rigidities" in labor markets (e.g., trade unions and wage indexation). In the U.S. and later in Europe, those monetarist policies were accompanied by an explicitly supply-side effort to shift resources from workers to capital.[9] Those were policy recommendations whose class meaning should be recognized: direct and indirect attacks on a working class whose struggles have escaped control and whose behavior must be brought into line with accumulation.

This shift in monetary policy had the direct effects of dramatically raising interest rates and precipitating the Reagan Recession, the latter in conjunction with an initially mild fiscal stimulus (from tax cuts and increased defence expenditures—partially offset by reduced social expenditure). This constituted another major moment, after the shift to floating exchange rates and the recycling of debt, in the capitalist manipulation of money to regain control in the class struggle. Such were the means by which the highest unemployment rates since the Great Depression, coupled with reductions in average real support for those losing their jobs, were able to bring about substantial reductions in average real wages in the U.S. To the degree that this occurred, the Carter-Volcker-Reagan monetarist attack on the working class succeeded, not only in the U.S. but elsewhere, as real wages slumped and wage hierarchies were restructured around the world.

Thus both the dramatic rise in the interest rates (which raised the cost of debt service so substantially) and the global recession (which increased the difficulty of earning foreign exchange for those who had borrowed during the 1970s) must be understood as another phase in a decade long effort by capital to turn the crisis against the workers who had precipitated it. In this case, the focal point was conflict with workers in the U.S., but the size and centrality of the U.S. moment of global accumulation meant the rapid circulation of this new phase in the conflict to all parts of the world. In the case of the other creditor nations, such as Europe and Japan, the effect would be to cause a similar monetary tightening and parallel attacks on the working class through high unemployment. In the case of the debtor nations, in both East and West, the result was to dramatically increase the pressure on local managers to resolve their local difficulties with workers. The increased cost and difficulty of servicing the debt would be the proximate cause of the explosion of the crisis in August 1982 when Mexican capital declared its inability to cope and demanded a rescheduling of the debt in line with more realistic prospects of gaining control over accumulation.

— VANGUARD WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 18, 1985


IMF DEBATE
Make we take the money, we go get plenty money and everybody go get rich.
ILLI-TERATE
NO POLITICAL TALKS!
POLITICIAN
IMF? The more money you carry, the less NAIRA you'll have!
PROFESSOR
Your MISFORTUNE is my business and my business is my HAPPINESS!
IMF
$
$
MOOYIWA ADETILLA

NOTES

1. One well known example of an analysis which deals with the crisis primarily in terms of capital's own categories is Cheryl Payer's work. While careful in tracing and critiquing the action and interactions of the capitalist players in the debt story, Payer hardly recognizes the working class as a substantive actor. For example, in her article (1987) we learn much about the actions of private banks, the U.S. government, and various international agencies (such as the IMF). Of workers and their power, we learn almost nothing: workers in the developed countries can be threatened by debtor country exports (pp. 199, 203) and "poor people" (presumably at least some of these are considered workers) have been hurt by the debt crisis. In such analyses, we lose the ability to view the situation, past or present, from our own point of view and thus to find strategies most appropriate to our goals. See also the articles by Wood (1985, 1988). Further examples are found in two other radical books on the current crisis: Watkins (1986) and Wachtel (1986).

2. I don't want to ignore the more private but all too common motives of borrowers: the corrupt practice of skimming personal wealth off the edges of the massive loans, and often depositing that wealth in foreign banks. Muckrakers have had a never ending source of dirt in this regard, but given the amounts that have been spent on investment in social control, I see no reason to think this skimming is a prime motivation. Regardless of the percentages diverted into capital flight, be they high or low, the reason for the export of capital is the exporters' perception of high risk in their own countries as a result of intense class struggle—which is the same perception that motivated the official borrowing in the first place.

3. The successful utilization of borrowed money to finance accumulation is not a "gain" to be recognized and defended by the Left, as Robert Wood (1985) claims in an otherwise interesting article, but rather simply another case of putting people to work and exploiting them—the standard method of social control, whether carried out by private or state capitalists. When Wood quotes Peter Kilborn of the *New York Times* that "few Brazilians would undo much of the work of the technocrats...networks of roads, banking, telecommunications and electric power...a widely diversified industrial base," he shows little empathy with the mass of the Brazilian people whose virtually forced labor created these wonderful by-products of development and who continue to be rendered miserable by them. Do we have to repeat endlessly the case against roads built for the rape of a country and its people; against banks whose only purpose is ripping off a share of surplus value; against telecommunications which serve primarily to facilitate social control; against electric power, 90% of which is used for exploitation and pollutes rather than improves people's lives; and against "diversified industry," which in Brazil not only exploits people and nature but produces mainly for the rich and foreign markets.

4. The argument that OPEC acted to stem a decades-long drain of wealth, and was especially motivated to do so after the decade of the 1960s which saw a steady decline in the terms of trade between oil and Western manufactured goods, is undoubtedly truth. But this explanation does little to explain the timing of the shift in policy (which began well before the Seven Days War) nor the uses to which the money was put.

5. Moran (1976-77) shows how internal pressures were prompting Iran to demand ever higher prices in OPEC negotiations.

6. In a remarkable work that analyses the entire history of Nigeria from colonialism through to the 1980s, Izielen Agbon (1985) has delineated, in considerable detail, the cycle of struggle that led up to the Nigerian Civil War and that has followed it.

7. At least two parts of the economic discussion of the early 1970s have to be combined to see this clearly. The first is made up of the preoccupations with a "capital shortage." Martin Feldstein's work is a good example of this. The second is associated with the Trilateral Commission whose study groups on the international monetary crisis and the energy crisis were among the first to see the opportunities in the new situation (Campbell et al., 1974a, 1974b, Gardner et al., 1975). Together this material illustrates capital's own view of what Midnight Notes has called the neo-Ricardian strategy of manipulating the prices of basic goods to undermine wages and shift value to Capital (*The Work/Energy Crisis and the Apocalypse*, 1980).

8. This maintenance of average real wages, however, was bought at the price of substantial widening in the differentials between those with the power to maintain or increase their real wage and those who could not. Such widening differentials tended, ceteris paribus, to decompose previous structures of power in the working class in favor of capitalist control.

9. For a more detailed treatment of supply-side economics and capitalist strategy in this period see Cleaver (1981). (English original is available from the author.)

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Agbon, Solomon Izielen (1985) *Class Struggle and Economic Development in Nigeria: 1900-1980*, Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Texas at Austin.

Campbell, John C., de Carmoy, Guy and Kondo, Shinchi (1974a) *Energy: The Imperative for a Trilateral Approach*, New York: Trilateral Commission.

_____, (1974b) *Energy: A Strategy for International Action*, New York: Trilateral Commission.

Cleaver, Harry (1977) "Food, Famine and the International Crisis," *Zerowork #2*.

_____ (1981) "Supply-side economics: Splendoi e miserie," *Metropoli*, 7, Anno 3, Numero 7, Dicembre, pp. 32-48.

Gardner, Richard N., Okita, Saburo and Udink, B.J. (1975) OPEC, *The Trilateral World, and the Developing Countries: New Arrangements for Cooperation, 1976-1980*, New York: Trilateral Commission.

Midnight Notes Collective (1980) *The Work/Energy Crisis and the Apocalypse*, Jamaica Plain. See also "Audit of the Crisis", Midnight Notes, Vol. IV #1.

Moran, T.H. (1976-77) "Why Oil Prices Go Up: OPEC Wants Them," *Foreign Policy* #25, Winter.

Oppenheim, V. H. (1976-77) "Why Oil Prices Go Up: We Pushed Them," *Foreign Policy* #25, Winter.

Payer, Cheryl (1987) "Causes of the Debt Crisis," in Cherry, Robert, et al. (eds.), *The Imperiled Economy*, New York: The Union for Radical Political Economics.

Watkins, Al (1986) *Til Debt Do Us Part: Who Wins, Who Loses and Who Pays for the International Debt Crisis*, New York: University Press of America.

Wachtel, Howard (1986) *The Money Mandarins: The Making of a Supranational Economic Order*, New York: Pantheon.

Wood, Robin E. (1985) "Making Sense of the Debt Crisis: A Primer for Socialists," *Socialist Review*, 81, vol. 15, no. 3, May-June, pp. 7-33.

_____(1988) "Debt Crisis Update: 1988," *Socialist Review*, 88/3, vol. 18, no. 3, July-September, pp. 103-115.

HOLDING THE GREEN LINE: ISRAELI ECOLOGICAL IMPERIALISM

by Les Levidow

A specter is haunting Israel — the specter of the *intifada* continuing to spread beyond the limits of the Occupied Territories. A 'Green Line' notionally separates Palestinian-Arab citizens of Israel from Jordanian passport holders in the West Bank and the non-citizens of the Gaza Strip. However, Zionist oppression has hardly respected this line, and neither have Palestinian protests.

When Israeli politicians disagree on strategic responses to the *intifada*, they are responding to widespread fears that it will destabilize acceptance of the Zionist state by Palestinian-Arab citizens inside the Green Line, whom Israel relegates to second-class status. This threat to Israeli national identity also informs the diverse strategic responses by Palestinian-Arab political leaders there, most of whom seek to hold the Green Line. Although Palestinian Arabs comprise only 18% of the Israeli citizenry, their disruptive potential can be seen from their economic role in performing the construction and service jobs shunned by most Israelis, though formerly done by many Oriental Jews.

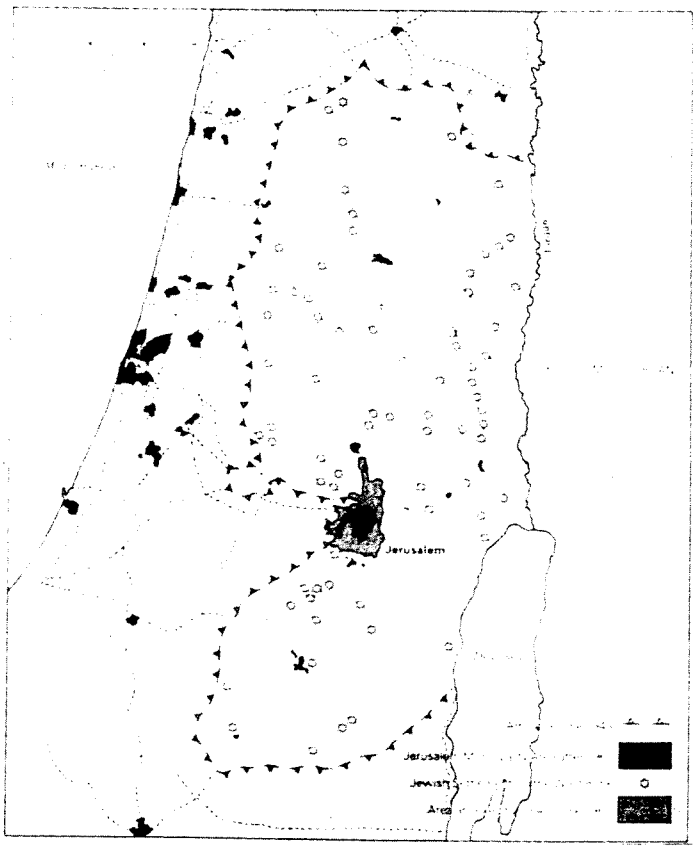
The 'Green Line' took its name from the generic map-color of military armistice lines, but the color can be seen to have an ecological meaning as well. The border mediates a relentless exploitation of land and water, even their potential exhaustion, by an Israeli state determined to usurp these resources from the Palestinian population on both sides of the Green Line. The Israeli government's great resistance to Palestinian demands derives partly from its growing economic reliance upon this systematic theft, an ecological imperialism intended to subordinate or even strangle Arab agriculture.

Through the course of the *intifada*, Israeli oppression of Palestinians in the Occupied Territories has become well known, but its counterpart within Israel is less well known. Since the State of Israel was founded in 1948, its Palestinian-Arab citizens too have had their land confiscated, their water sources diverted and their houses blown up. They have also faced the punishment of 'administrative detention', without trial, for suspicion of political opposition.

The response from Palestinian-Arab citizens within Israel has included annual general strikes in commemoration of March 30, 1976, when the Israeli police and army shot dead several of them who were protesting confiscation of their farmland. The period around Land Day 1989, the second one since the *intifada* started, brought to a head a set of tensions around both economic exploitation and national identity.

Land Day 1989

On Land Day in East Jerusalem, which Israel annexed after the 1967 Six-Day War, youths raised the Palestinian flag and blocked roads, while schoolgirls erupted into frequent demonstrations chanting "PLO, PLO" in the direct view of soldiers who predictably responded with plastic bullets. Even within Israel's 1948 borders (the Green Line), young Palestinian-Arab citizens in several places displayed the flag, threw petrol bombs at police cars, and cut water pipes to Jewish settlements. An Israeli journalist quoted such youths as saying that they saw little difference in treatment by the Israeli authorities on their side of the Green Line. That is, they saw their Israeli citizenship as no protection from the sort of oppression inflicted upon Palestinians in the Occupied Territories.



The Occupied West Bank, 1986

Following clashes with police in Nazareth on Land Day 1988, local leaders decided to move the 1989 Galilee protests out of the city and into villages to the north, with a march from Sakhnin to Deir Hana. As Sakhnin was the site of the 1976 killings being commemorated, certainly this decision had a strong symbolic rationale. Yet the move can also be seen as a pre-emptive move by the Israeli Communist Party (Rakah), the leading electoral force among Palestinian-Arab citizens within Israel: Rakah sought to limit any public confrontation, particularly around display of the Palestinian flag.

Not only is such display illegal, but it challenges Rakah's policy of displaying the *Israeli* flag — and even singing "Hatikvah," the Zionist national anthem. The conflict arises from the party's insistence that Palestinian-Arab citizens within Israel already have a country, Israel. According to Nazareth lawyer Aziz Shehadeh, Rakah tries to stop youths from raising the Palestinian flag as "part of its deal with the Establishment, to gain legitimation in Jewish society." As put more bluntly by Ali Jedda, of the Alternative Information Centre (Jerusalem), no police were needed at Deir Hana because "Rakah were the border police." His comparison refers, of course, less to physical repression than to an ideological policing of Israeli versus Palestinian national identity.

Shortly before Land Day, many politicians warned demonstrators against displaying the Palestinian flag. "We will not tolerate attempts from any group to incite violence. We have said that there will be no illegal slogans or signs. Anyone acting to the contrary will be stopped", said Abdel Wahab Darousha, Knesset Member for the Arab Democratic Party (*Jerusalem Post* March 29, 1989). Blaming demonstrators in advance for any Israeli retaliation, he assured Israeli Jews that Land Day "is not a day against the state."

As it happened, the policing failed. The flag was carried briefly by the contingent from Ibna al-Balad (Sons of the Village), the only Palestinian-Arab group within Israel who considers the PLO to represent them. They displayed the flag while chanting "This land is Arab land; Israel get out." Far more than a matter of defying Israeli law and defending land rights, such display questioned the Israeli national identity of those who flaunt it.

It is true that Land Day demonstrators more generally shouted, "We want the same rights as Israeli Jews," and "The *intifada* will continue until winning a Palestinian state." Most Palestinian—Arab politicians within Israel portray this latter slogan simply as solidarity with Palestinians of the Occupied Territories. Yet, coming in response to the insatiable Zionist grab for land and water, the wider forms of revolt suggest a potential challenge to the Israeli state itself. That prospect has been broached, in almost comically alarmist terms, by Israeli newspapers which carried such headlines as "Intifada in Haifa" (*Ma'ariv*) or which claimed that the PLO "instructed the Palestinians of the Occupied Territories to drag the Israeli Arabs into the uprising" (*Yediot Ahronot* 27 March 1989).

Titus Kramer

Underground intifada activists spreading leaflets of the united leadership.

Threat to Israeli survival?

A similar conspiratorial logic had guided the government in 1988 in closing down two Arab-language newspapers, even though their contents were regularly cleared by the official government censors. Both papers were circulating news from the Occupied Territories among Palestinians within the Green Line. Most extraordinary was the official rationale for the closures. The newspaper produced by Ibna al-Balad, *Al-Raya*, was accused of being a front for the PFLP; Jews and Arabs producing the other banned paper, *Tariq al-Sharara*, were arrested for supposed membership in the DFLP and some editors given long prison sentences. In the dominant Zionist demonology, both these sections of the PLO epitomize the bloodthirsty 'terrorist' who wants only to infiltrate Israel to kill Jews. By using such accusations to close the two newspapers operating inside the Green Line, the authorities attributed

Mai Masri and Jean Chamoun

War Generation: Beirut

protests there to an external plot, aimed at destroying Israel.

While Zionism thrives on such conspiratorial paranoia, it is not mere paranoia for Israel to perceive a threat to its stability from the *intifada*, given the country's dependence upon expropriated land and water. The Palestinian threat has given rise to two strategic responses: indirect versus direct control. This strategic issue within Zionism parallels a similar one faced by all modern imperial powers, particularly by 19th-century Britain.

Around the time of Land Day 1989, Vice-Premier Shimon Peres expressed willingness to consider some conditional concession of 'land for peace,' in order to resolve the conflict before it further arouses nationalist aspirations among Israel's Arab population. In his view, it is better to get some puppet regime to police the Palestinians for Israel, which of course "does not wish to rule another people" (*Jerusalem Post* , March 21, 1989). After the demise of the 'Jordanian option,' the proposed elections for the Occupied Territories seemed to offer a variant of the same basic strategy.

Foreign Minister Moshe Ahrens took a different strategic view: that any concessions would encourage Palestinian national aspirations and lead to demands for yet more concessions. If Israel were to recognize the PLO, warned Ahrens, the PLO could "impose itself upon the Palestinians in the Territories, subjugate the Palestinians who are citizens of Israel and destabilize Jordan" (*Jerusalem Post*, March 21, 1989).

A more extreme version of Ahrens' logic sees Israel's survival threatened by the very presence of Palestinians in the Occupied Territories or even within the Green Line. Hence the rise of the 'Homeland' (*Ze'evi Party*) openly proposing wholesale 'transfer' — a euphemism for mass expulsions. While justifying their proposals in terms which strike an observer as paranoid, their designs on *Eretz Israel* (Greater Israel) simply extend the imperialist process that founded the State of Israel and that has guided its expropriation of resources since then. Indeed, when Zionist politicians resist all Palestinian demands as a threat to Israel's survival, a grain of truth lies in the term survival, considered in terms of ecological imperialism.

Making the Desert Bloom?

Put in statistical terms, it has been estimated that at least one-third of Israel's water supply is pumped from the West Bank. Israeli control of the West Bank's water even predates the 1967 Six-Day War. Long before then, Israel pumped water along the 1949 armistice line by using deep-drilled artesian wells. "After the West Bank was conquered by guns, the looting became much simpler" (ICCP, 1989). That is, Israel dug wells much deeper than the Palestinians' existing wells, which then became exhausted and/or more salty.

Within 1948 Israel (the Green Line), the government had already regulated new well-drilling through licenses, which were usually denied to Palestinians. After 1967 this control was extended to the Occupied Territories. The state imposed fines on anyone who drilled more than a fixed quota of water and expropriated wells belonging to 'absentee landlords' — Palestinians who fled the invading Israeli army even if they subsequently attempted to return. According to Israeli government plans, by 1990 the West Bank's projected 100,000 Israeli settlers would have access to nearly as much water as the area's one million Palestinians (though so far the number of settlers has fallen far short of that figure). In 1982 the West Bank's entire hydrological system was integrated into the Israeli national water company Mekorot. A suppressed report, prepared a few years ago, saw this integration of water systems as an obstacle to Palestinian independence: "... to the extent that the basic public water services in the Occupied Territories have been interwoven with, and made dependent on, Israel's own public water services, the former eventually will find it difficult to manage independently such essential services as water distribution for domestic, municipal, agricultural and industrial uses. It may thus become practically and politically impossible to sever the water administration of the Occupied Territories from those of Israel" (quoted in ICCP, 1989).

Israel further undermines Palestinian agriculture by subsidizing its own agricultural exports to the Occupied Territories and restricting other countries' exports. As a result, the Territories become a literally captive market: for example, Palestinians there can buy Israeli milk and eggs more cheaply than those produced locally. Subsidies also maintain three-quarters of the Jewish settlers in the West Bank as commuters to jobs in Israel — not even as subsidized farmers using the land expropriated from the Palestinians. As Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin declared in 1985, there will be "no permits given for expanding agriculture or industry that may compete with the State of Israel."

Pumping station carries water from a predominantly Bedouin area of Israel to a Jewish settlement above on the hill.

If we take into account all Israeli restrictions imposed on formerly Arab land, then by 1987 the extent of land expropriation had exceeded 40% of the Gaza Strip and 50% of the West Bank, including half the Jordan Valley farmland. Not only have the Palestinians suffered reduced access to land and water since 1967, but they have faced punitive measures since the *intifada*: further Israeli restrictions on crop exports, irrigation and new enterprises; higher taxes and fines; curfews even in rural areas, etc. Many have abandoned agriculture for low-wage jobs in Israel. For all the above reasons, at least 10% of the West Bank's farmland has been lost to agriculture since 1967 (ICCP).

As economist Hisham Awartani has argued, the Territories' economy has been "subordinated to that of Israel in a model of dependency that is much worse than typical models commonly reviewed in economic literature." Israeli policy aims at "undermining independent economic development to pre-empt the viability of a future Palestinian state," as well as "drawing surplus cheap Palestinian labor into the Israeli labor market." Having once made the desert bloom, Palestinians find their agriculture strangled by ecological imperialism.

Since long before the *intifada*, one Palestinian response has been the 'unauthorized' planting of olive trees. This can have only symbolic effects in a situation where the Israeli Army regularly blows up Palestinians' houses, obstructs access to their fields, burns their crops and uproots trees. On several occasions it has justified such uprooting by claiming that orchards were being used as hiding places for throwing petrol bombs at Israeli Army vehicles (Ashkar, 1989). That pretext exemplifies the paranoid logic that regards the Palestinian agriculture, and the Palestinian presence itself, as a security threat.

Land expropriation has proceeded as well inside the Green Line: since the 1948 War of Independence, Israel has taken away roughly 80% of Arab land, including much of the most fertile land. As in the Occupied Territories, Arab farmers inside the Green Line face severe restrictions on well-drilling. These policies have blocked the expansion of Arab villages, during a period when the Palestinian-Arab citizenry within Israel has increased roughly five-fold to 750,000. In the case of Sakhnin, site of the 1976 massacre commemorated on Land Day, most local people were once farmers but now commute to city jobs as wage-laborers.

According to Mansour Kardosh, of the Nazareth-based Human Rights Association, many second-generation Palestinian-Arab citizens within Israel already earn more money than they could earn from agriculture, yet they have "absorbed their parents' dream of returning to the land." Even those without such aspirations feel strongly that the Israeli government should compensate the farmers for the true commercial value of the land already expropriated, allow more housebuilding, irrigation, etc. And there remains the continual threat of further expropriations in the name of 'nature reserves' or military use.

Some observers suggest that the *intifada* has led the Israeli government to hold back on further anti-Arab measures inside the Green Line, for fear that the revolt would spread to Palestin-

ian-Arab citizens there. This may have lent some credibility to the attempt by the Palestinian-Arab parties there to restrict the struggle to one for democratic rights within the Zionist state. Yet many openly doubt that the struggle can or should respect such boundaries.

Ali Jedda criticizes those politicians who promote the illusion that Palestinian-Arab citizens within Israel can achieve full citizenship rights there. "Many of us are coming to understand that the problem is the nature of the Israeli state — not just the occupation." For him, as for many Ibna al-Balad supporters, only the collapse of that state can overcome the Palestinians' oppression on both sides of the Green Line. Indeed, given the engineered economic underdevelopment of the Occupied Territories, a two-state solution may create a Palestinian bantustan, while reinforcing the second-class status of Palestinian-Arab citizens within Israel.

When they express solidarity with the *intifada*, their actions tend to merge with demands on their own behalf, and this link carries the potential for extending Palestinian national aspirations across the Green Line. The two-state solution, currently promoted by the PLO leadership, may falter not just because of Israeli intransigence but also because of that extended revolt. Will the Zionist counter-insurgency, along with 'soft policing' by some Arab politicians within Israel, succeed in holding the Green Line? Or will Zionist ecological imperialism provoke a response that destabilizes the Israeli state itself?

References

ICCP (1989) *Land and Water*. Prepared by Iolandad Jaquemet and Stephane Jaquemet for the International Coordinating Committee for NGOs on the Question of Palestine. Available from ICCP, PO Box 2100, 1121 Geneva 2, Switzerland.

Ahmad Ashkar (1989) "Agriculture and the Intifada," typescript dated 9 January, distributed by the Human Rights Association, P.O.B. 215, Nazareth.

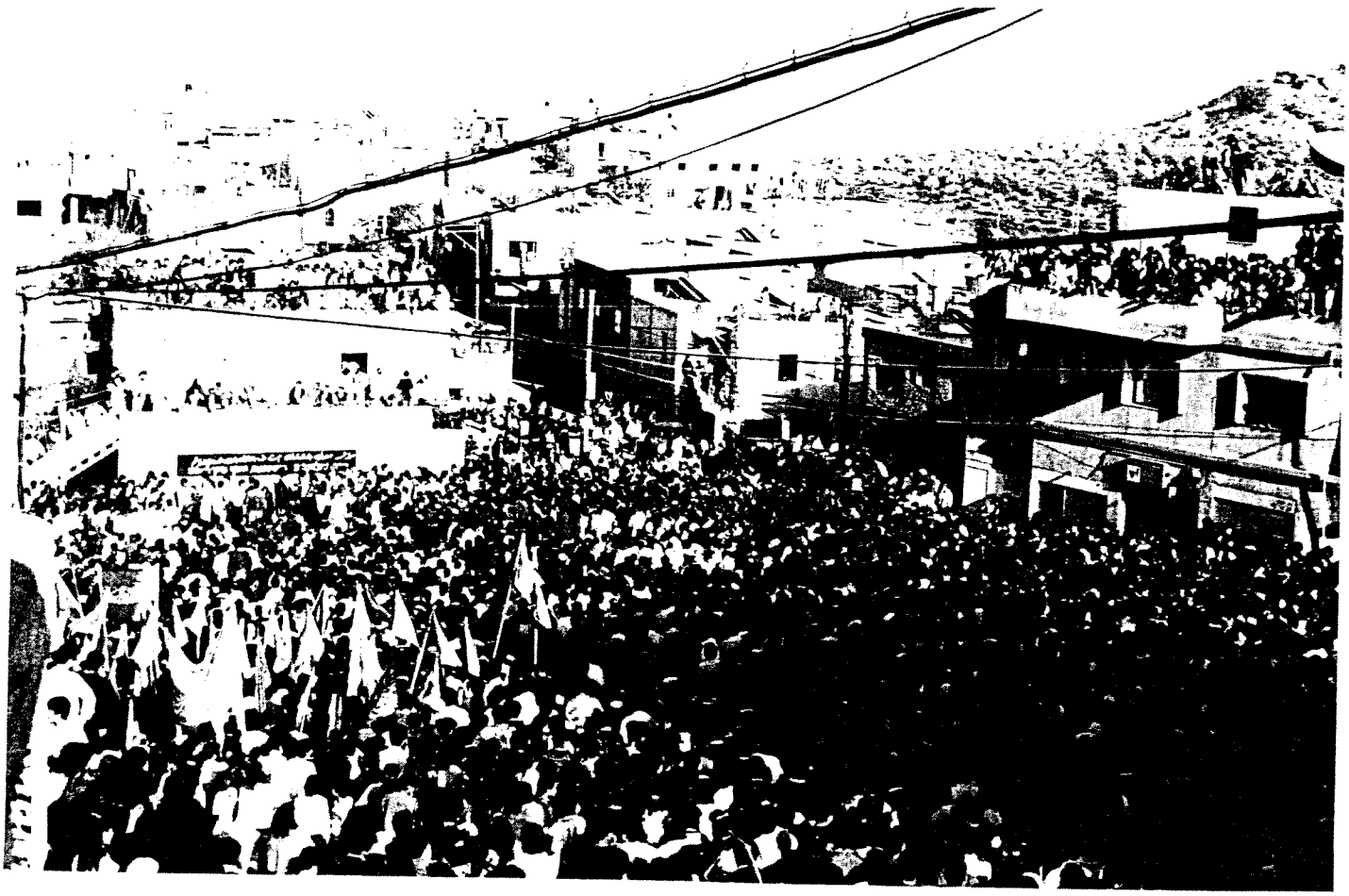
Awartani, H. (1989) "The Territories' economic collapse — more than intifada at work," *Jerusalem Post* 29 March.

Author's Notes

When quotations from Palestinian Arabs are not attributed to any published source, they are taken from interviews conducted by the author in spring 1989.

I would like to thank Uri Davis, and the staff of the Damascus-based magazine *Democratic Palestine*, for their helpful comments towards improving this article, though the final version remains my responsibility alone.

The author is a Jewish unAmerican who has signed the 'Return' petition, which opposes the Israeli Law of Return and supports the Palestinian right of return. He currently works as a researcher in the Technology Faculty, Open University, Milton Keynes, and as an editor at Free Association Books, London.



Deir Hanna, Land Day, March 30, 1989

Some Photographs That I Was Not Able To Take: Egypt and the Red Sea

by Ed Emory

Red Sea - December 1982

It's seven in the evening on board the m/a Sindibad, registered in Jeddah and heading south from Suez, down the Red Sea, to Aqaba. The sun has just gone down in a blaze of colour behind the hills. I won't try to describe it to you because in fact I was asleep when it happened—but if it was anything like the setting sun on the road from Cairo last night, it must have been spectacular. The last I saw of it was as I looked back through the window of the 7-seater Peugeot taxi and saw four Egyptian army tanks returning, line astern, from their evening maneuvers. They sent up billows of sand behind them, and were silhouetted against the globe of the sun as it sat red on the horizon. When the sun goes down, there's a short period of orange glow. A fine sight.

When I was in London I spent a month trying to find out if there are ships on this route. Well, there are. At least one a day. But the reason that you don't hear about them is because they're only engaged in carrying workers, not tourists. One way that Egypt solves its unemployment problem is by exporting labour —and this ship is a floating transporter of labour. Out of a population of something like 46 million, about 5 million emigrate to find work all over the Arab world; from Iraq to Saudi and beyond. It's strange, this ship, because at other times in the year it does carry American tourists (on cruises), it's a little bit luxurious—but now it's got 750 passengers, none of whom speak more than a few words of English. (We batter away at it, and slowly I'm learning Arabic). And out of those 750, I have seen only 2 women, 748 men. And an all-male crew (Greeks, Sri Lankans, all sorts). And even the moon outside is male (unlike most European languages, in Arabic, they tell me, the moon is male and the sun is female).

Traveling Workers

I've been trying to figure out where the people come from, and where they are going. A group of five men from Cairo are going to Baghdad for work. They have families in Cairo. They expect to be away for 10 months. They don't have particular trades. Will turn their hands to anything. Another group, of four, are also going to Iraq, to work in the oil industry. One is a driver. Another group, of two, are Palestinians, living in Jordan (one driven out in '48 and the other in '67). They are truck drivers, carrying fruit on a Mercedes truck all over the Arab world, from Lebanon to Saudi.

The bar is full of people. From behind the counter Arab tea and cheese rolls are sold, and a few soft drinks. No alcohol. The air is thick with cigarette smoke. Most people are dressed in Arab dress - varieties of headscarves, long robes. You can tell by looking at faces and hands that many of them are farmers, country people. The same poor sods who spent last night out on the pavements next to the mosque and custom house of Port Tawfiq. The same people who are pushed and shouted at by the lowest police constable. The same people who wait - wait their turn, wait in line, wait in huddled groups, wait looking through the gaps in the dock gates, wait for some official to deign to notice their existence. Always waiting. The people of the earth. Their faces and their clothes are the colour of the earth. Dark and brown. On board ship it's as if they've been plucked from their element. Blue and white foaming sea-water is not their element. The ships engines pound beneath them. Most of these country people are travelling deck class. A classic scene of migrants of any era—except, these are all men. They squat on the rear deck, under a canopy ringed by ridiculous coloured fairy lights, sitting on mats or blankets. As night comes on, they pull on more layers of clothing, wrapping themselves in blankets and winding long scarves round their head and face to keep off the following sea breeze. Their luggage is battered suitcases, splitting at the seams. Or plastic hold-alls. Zips sometimes broken. Held together with rope. Some have no baggage at all. When they lie down to sleep they take off their plastic sandals and use them as a pillow. Others have plastic bags with eggs and bread for the journey. Periodically one or two get up and move to the port side of the boat. They take off their scarves and spread them on the deck. Then, facing Mecca (which is getting closer all the time) they begin their prayers. But this is only one or two, from what I've see. The rest talk among themselves. Or stare out into the black night. Some also read. And on the far shore a brilliant red glow shows an oil well flaring off gases. Fore and aft ships pass us in the night. And overhead the stars are clear, clear, clear.

The two Palestinians, as I say, are truck drivers. They have been driven out of their homes by the Israelis. Driven out by economic necessity. One of them says that, living in Nablus, he would (by law) have to return there every night after work. So, if he went to work in Tel Aviv, he would have to get up at 4:00 a.m., and then the same journey back. By the time he gets home he would be dog tired—no time for his wife or kids. So, instead, he decided to move to Jordan, with his wife and 6 kids, and work as a truck driver all over the Arab world. The Palestinians have been driven from their homeland both by the economic pressure and by military terror. Their case is known internationally. Theirs is an army of refugees, driven from one country to another. But what about the other army of refugees—the international army of emigrant workers? When I saw a hundred or so of these country people marched from the Port Tawfiq immigration office towards the ship, laden with bags and bundles, they could almost have been refugees—except that

there were no women, no young children and no old men. Those have been left behind on the land, to make some sort of living. These were raw labour power; country lads. I watched them as they clustered round the space invader machines and pinball tables next to the Purser's office on B-deck. They stood and stared. These were not people of the city. And I wondered what traditions of solidarity they take with them from their villages of origin - what links and bonds of helping each other, maintaining contacts to shield themselves from the worst of the exploitation they will face. By what process will they come to see themselves as "workers of the world", and by what process will they organize themselves into trade unions and political parties of the working class? For as long as the rich Arab masters can draft in this army as and when they want them, keeping them on short contracts, working long hours, for low wages, this process of organization will take a longtime. But then, Henry Ford has also, for decades, maintained a policy of importing almost raw country labor into his factories, from every country of the world - and in the end, they too have organized (well...just about!).

The point I would make is that the Palestinians, when they are driven from their land, have world support and solidarity. But the Egyptian farm labourer who is driven from his land, driven away from his family, driven to other countries, has no face. He just moves, as part of that faceless mass of millions who are uprooted by economic imperatives. It's almost as if he doesn't exist. He doesn't make history, or make culture, or leave his name in lights. His archaeological remains in a few hundred years time will be virtually nothing — just bones and rags. But without him nothing would be built, nothing made. He, and millions like him, from every nationality.

There's something very powerful about the seven men, dressed in head scarves and traditional Arab clothes, sitting cross legged in a circle on the rear deck, talking quietly and smoking as the black sea rushes past into the night, and home gets further and further away.

Postscript: Migrant workers continue to leave Egypt to work under dangerous conditions throughout the Mideast. In 1989, Iraq returned to Egypt 1000 bodies of migrant workers who died on account of the brutalities they had been subjected to at work.

Note: This was one of several letters sent to friends by Ed Emory in November-December 1982.

Mexican Teachers Update

On April 17, 1989, over half a million teachers throughout the country joined a wildcat strike called by the National Coordinating Council of Education Workers (CNDE) of Mexico. The teachers demanded wage increases and union democracy. The strike reasserted nationally the teachers' struggles that had for a time been active in only a few states. (MN #9 examined the campaigns of the teachers in Chiapas state who founded the CNTE.)

Despite opposition from the Salinas regime and the corporatist union bureaucracy, the teachers remained on strike until gaining a major victory on May 15. They smashed Salinas' Economic Solidarity pact limiting wage increases, caused the toppling of the teachers union boss, gained major reforms opening up the union bureaucracy to the movement, and won many parents as allies in their continuing struggle.

(See *The Other Side of Mexico* #10, $15 sub from Apartado Postal 27-467, 96760 Mexico D.F., Mexico.)

CLIPPED COINS, ABUSED WORDS, & CIVIL GOVERNMENT

John Locke's Philosophy of Money

C. G. Caffentzis

Starting from an actual historical dispute involving the "clipping" of silver currency by money "pirates" in 17th-century England, Caffentzis's "ampliative" method opens out into an exceedingly original and provocative critique of John Locke's economic beliefs, his semantic theories and his philosophy of the state. Virtually all of the standard critical work on Locke is "undone" in Caffentzis's treatment, which is also of immediate consequence for the leading monetary theories of the present day. This is the first volume in a trilogy on the philosophies of money of the major British empiricists, Locke, Berkeley, and Hume.

ISBN: 0-936756-27-6 Paper, $9.95

INSCRUTABLE CHINA: READING STRUGGLES THROUGH THE MEDIA

by Silvia Federici

The bourgeoisie, by the rapid improvement of all instruments of production, by the immensely facilitated means of communication, draws all, even the most barbarian, nations into civilization. The cheap prices of its commodities are the heavy artillery with which it batters down all Chinese walls, with which it forces the barbarians' intensely obstinate hatred of foreigners to capitulate.

-Karl Marx, *Communist Manifesto*

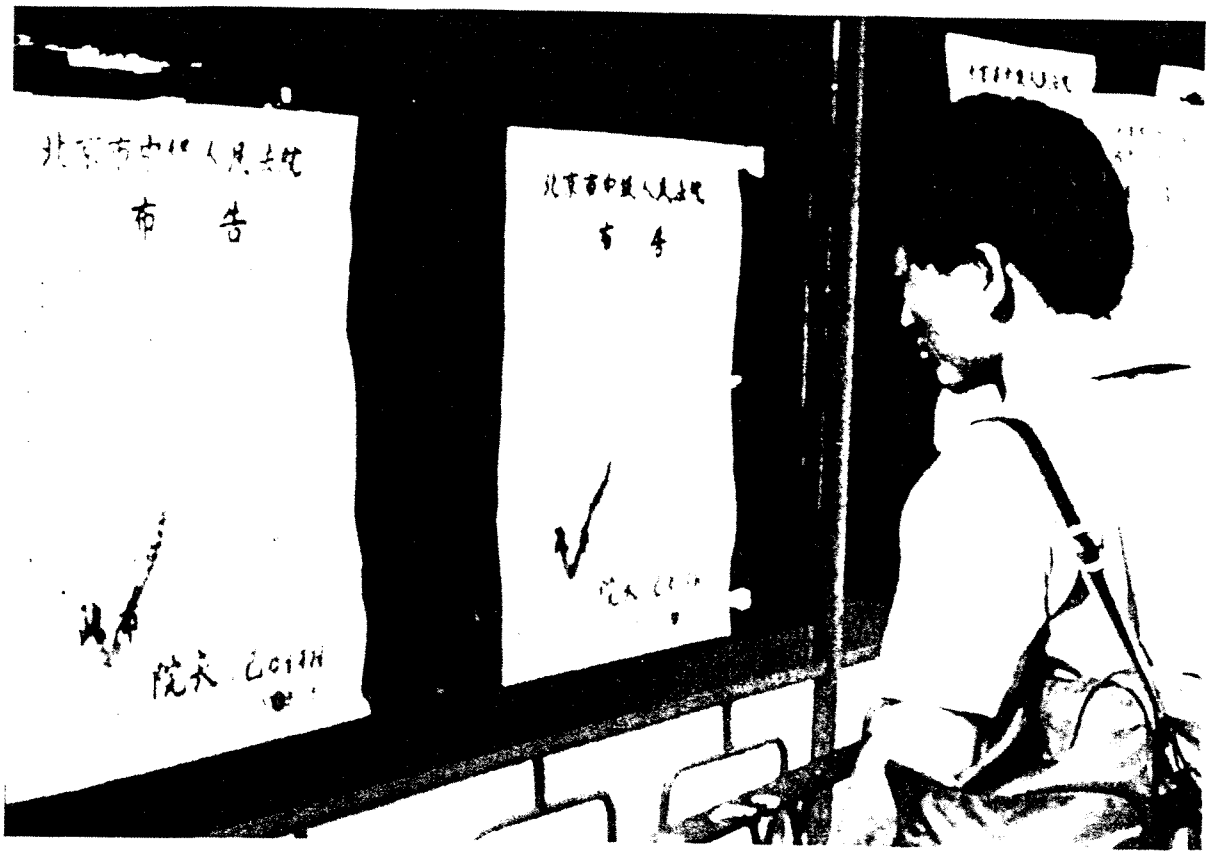
Why are the people starving?
Because the rulers eat up the money in taxes.
Therefore the people are starving.
Why are the people rebellious?
Because the rulers interfere too much.
Therefore they are rebellious.
Why do the people think so little of death?
Because the rulers demand too much of life.
Therefore the people take death lightly.
Having little to live on, one knows better than to value life too much.
-Lao Tsu, *Tao Te Ching*

The repression of the workers and students protest in China is presented by the media and the U.S. government as one more example of the pitfalls of realized socialism as well as an unambiguous sign of the commitment by the Chinese proletariat to a free-market economy. Thus, we are told that the students and workers on Tiananmen Square fought for Freedom and Democracy in addition to the acceleration of the processes that, over the last fifteen years, have put China on the road to a liberalized economy.

That this is the portrait of the events in China we are presented is no surprise. Both the Chinese and U.S. governments have much to gain by such a version. From the U.S. viewpoint, presenting the student-worker struggle as one exclusively aimed at political liberalization serves to hide the economic dimension of the protest. Reporters have not asked, e.g., the students about their living conditions or the demands of the Workers Autonomous Association, the new independent workers' union that held a tent in Tiananmen Square together with the students. It also serves to bolster the claim that what is at stake is a choice between freedom (i.e., capitalism) and totalitarianism and thus to bolster the useful aspects of cold-war ideology that are presently in danger of being once-and-for-all debunked by the Gorbachev love affair with the "free market" and the rush of Eastern Europe to liberalize and "westernize." The too rapid collapse of cold-war "tensions" worries the U.S. government because it risks undermining its right to maintain a nuclear arsenal in Europe, which—as Kissinger recently reminded us—is a must for U.S. hegemony. (Hence, the current Kissinger-Bush policy efforts to simultaneously bolster the Deng state in order to gain cheap labor while continuing to make of it an ideological "enemy.") From this point of view, to maintain the spectre of totalitarian, blood-thirsty communism is also a must, particularly when dealing with such weak-kneed allies as the Germans, who are now pushing for an immediate reduction of U.S. short-range missiles in Europe...while simultaneously, of course, making a profit from the "communist" workers of Eastern Europe.

As for the Chinese government, it is in their interest to present the worker-student movement as a foreign, "counter revolutionary" plot. First, as in other Third World countries, they know that appealing to anti-imperialist feelings is a good card. Second, they capitalize on the hostility that is growing in China against the economic liberalization process, even though they are committed to continue on the liberalization road—the more so now that the resistance to it has been, if not crushed, powerfully subdued.

Was the spring 1989 movement in China pro-capitalist, as the U.S. and Chinese media claim? Were the Chinese government's massacres, executions and incarceration of students and workers since June 4th a defense of socialism as both the U.S. and Chinese media claim? NO. This agreement between the U.S. and Chinese media is based on an elaborate lie, but the uncoverers of this lie are the very liars themselves, the media, especially the arch-liars, *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal* and *The Economist*. Let us take, as our first example, the NYT of June 21, 1989 in an article entitled "Campaign to Lure Back Business." How little the crackdown on the students and the workers is the expression of a new commitment to



Amnesty International

A passerby reads an execution notice outside the Beijing People's High Court. The red check mark at the bottom indicates the person has been executed. Seven people were put to that day.

"socialist goals" is indicated by the indefatigable efforts the communist leaders have made—as soon as the bloody streets of Beijing were washed—to lure back foreign investors, who we are told were prudently parked not too far away in Hong Kong. Their call was not unanswered, according to this piece. Indeed, investors are flocking back at such a pace that the Japanese government had to warn its businessmen to be a bit more discreet. As one midnight wag commented on this story, "Deng's slogan used to be 'Capitalism as a means, Communism as an end.' Now it is, 'Communism as a means, Capitalism as an end'!"

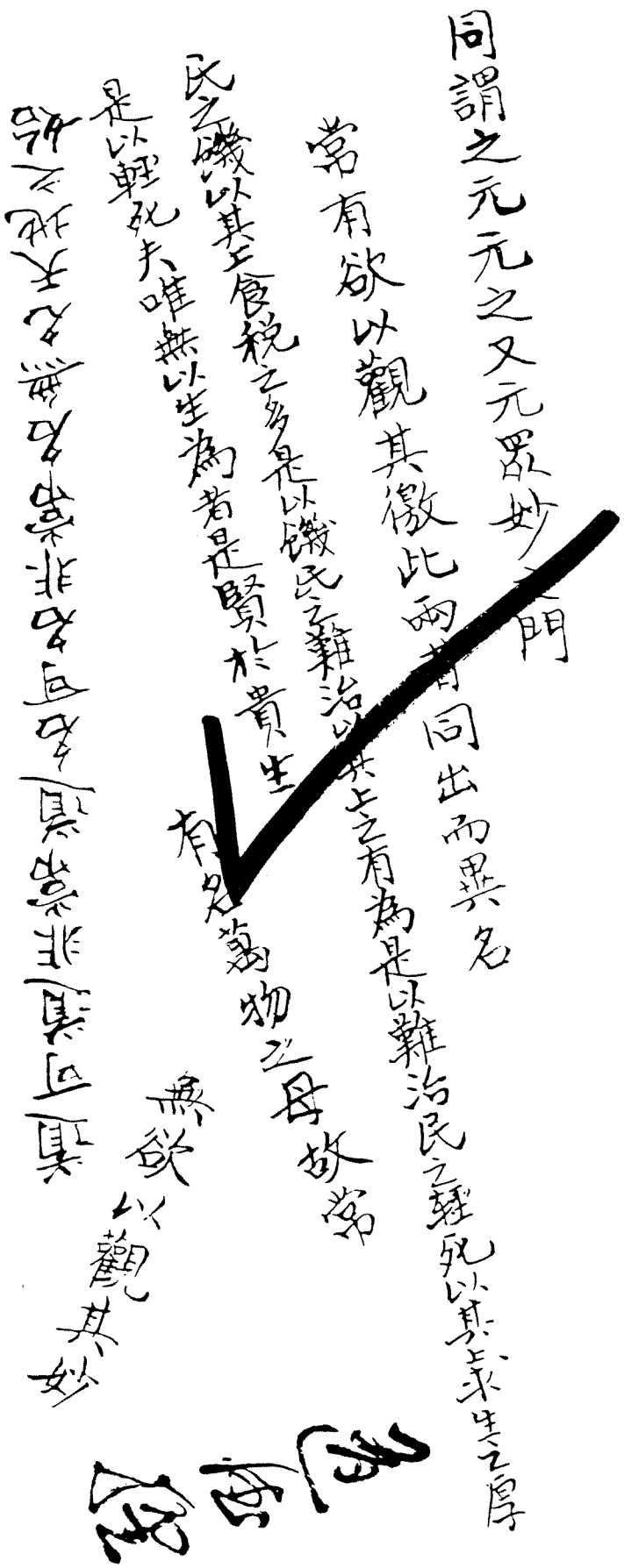
Here we have a contradiction between propaganda and knowledge characteristic of the U.S. media coverage of the spring 1989 events in China. The main point of this article is to demonstrate that even without "special" contacts on the scene in Beijing, one can read the media to know at least in outline the class relations and confrontations constituting major developments like those in China...and that this possibility is no accident. Our claim is in marked contrast to the most articulated leftist view concerning the U.S. media presented by Noam Chomsky and his co-workers. Chomsky argues that the media perform in a "democratic" society like the U.S. what state violence does for "totalitarian" states like the Soviet Union and China: it creates obedience and consent. He has done much to point out the "thought control" aspects of the U.S. media in numerous volumes, but he seems to forget that the media also necessarily function as an intra-capitalist communication channel. For there cannot be a large-scale capitalist world market without some widely disseminated knowledge, and one can translate this knowledge into class terms. This side of the media is what this article will reveal in the case of China, in order to show that with a careful, selective, class-oriented analysis the lineaments of as complex a class struggle as the one unfolding in China 1989 can be deciphered.

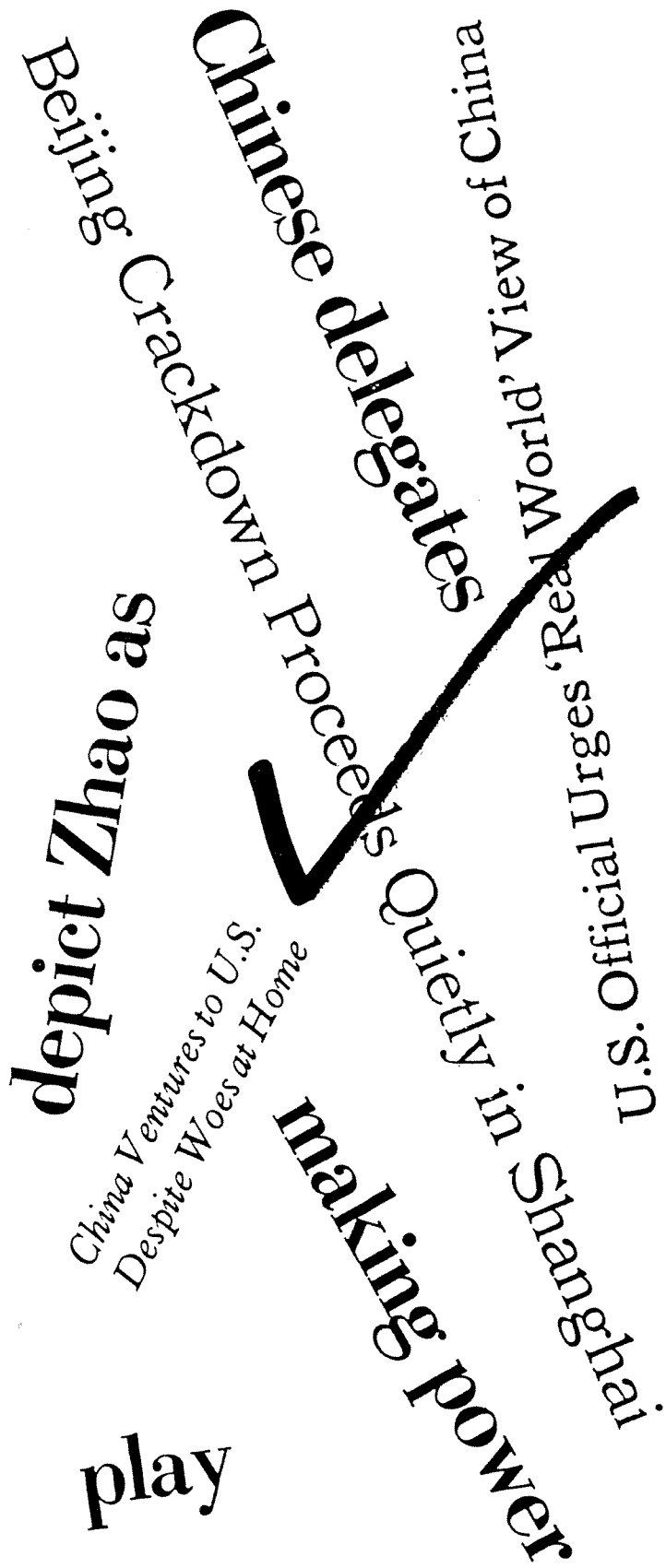
For months prior to the student demonstrations, a debate had gone on in China that reflected the extent of workers' dissatisfaction with the liberalization process and the dilemma facing the Chinese leadership, caught between the desire to further liberalize and the fear of social uprising. Under pressure by foreign investors who complained that "China is still paternal towards its companies" (i.e., its workers), throughout March the Chinese leaders debated the feasibility of new bankruptcy laws, whereby unprofitable companies would no longer be rescued but would be left to go bankrupt and therefore be forced to lay off their workers. That the bankruptcy issue had to do with workers' discipline was clearly stated by a NYT article entitled "Socialism Grabs a Stick; Bankruptcy in China" (March 7, 1989). According to the article, "Chinese officials say the bankruptcy laws are important more for the message they send to the workers—that profitability matters, even in socialist society." The article goes on to say that among the problems plaguing Chinese companies there is the fact that they "share an enormous burden of pension expenses, sometimes supporting four times as many retired workers as those on the job." Moreover, experiments made in some towns with layoffs (for example, in Shenyang) have not produced "satisfactory results." The companies had to pay collectively into a welfare fund to

provide insurance to the laid-off workers, thus eliminating the risks that bankruptcy was intended to create. "Indeed, workers have been allowed to collect substantial wage benefits even when they leave their jobs voluntarily." The article concludes that "while some economists think bankruptcy should become a more common sanction, they acknowledge that if the government did close down money losing companies it could face serious labor problems. A Western diplomat in China, who has followed the Shenyang experiments, noted that workers already disgruntled by inflation might cause serious labor disturbances if they lost their jobs."

The "labor problem" has been one of the most thorny issues for the Chinese government in recent years. Reports from China repeatedly pointed to a coming showdown with workers. An article entitled "Three Chinese Economists Urge an End to State Owned Industry" (January 10, 1989, NYT) stated that "companies try to maximize benefits to employees rather than profits and productivity." Right before the beginning of the demonstrations in Tiananmen Square, on April 6, 1989, the NYT ran an article entitled, "Second Thoughts; Laissez Faire or Plain Unfair." It stated, "Inflation and corruption, along with fear of unemployment and resentment of the newly wealthy, seem to be fostering a reassessment among Chinese farmers and workers about the benefits of sweeping economic change. Some Chinese officials and foreign diplomats are growing concerned that the Chinese people, instead of helping the market economy, will become an obstacle to it." The article mentions a factory that had been attacked by 60 "jealous" people, who smashed windows and cut the power supply. A hundred residents of the town the factory was in sued the factory owner to force him to share his profits.

This article emphasizes a new phrase, "the red eye disease," which is used by the Chinese government to describe and attack those who are jealous of the wealthy. It goes on to say that in Inner Mongolia the government has established a special team of bodyguards to protect entrepreneurs from neighbors with the "red eye disease." In the northern city of Shenyang, a seat of the new experiments in modernization and liberalization, a worker killed his boss last year. He was executed, but became a folk hero because the boss was regarded as a tyrant. Summing up, the article stated that the Chinese had previously regarded the market as a "cozy place of prosperity, not a source of pain...Everybody in China seems to be grumbling these days, and even the government acknowledges the depth of the discontent." It quoted a *People's Daily* forecast of not just economic but political crisis and supported this by noting that urban residents with a fixed income are being hurt by the 27% inflation rate. Many people are far from enthusiastic at the government's talk of "smashing the iron rice bowl" which is "the system of lifetime employment usually associated with laziness in the Chinese factories." Factory managers want the right to dismiss inefficient workers or lay them off when times are bad. Though the government is "gingerly moving in this direction, so far there have been no massive layoffs, even in Shenyang where the plan has gone the furthest. A Western diplomat worries that if liberalization of the workplace results in many layoffs there could be severe wildcat strikes and social unrest. 'Many people want to retain the "iron rice bowl",' an Asian diplomat said, 'it's a good system for those who do not





want to work too hard.'"

The "iron rice bowl" is not the only guarantee the workers are slated to lose. Housing is another. In a NYT article of March 1, 1989, "Chinese Face Epochal Wait for Housing," we are told that Zhao Ziyang had decided to make housing reform "one of the mainstays of the national economy." The article continues, "the decision to privatize home ownership was not taken lightly, for it challenges the underpinning of society as it has been interpreted here. For the last forty years, virtually free housing supplied by one's 'workers unit', or employer, has been as much of a staple of urban Chinese life as rice or noodles. Housing used to be a kind of welfare system, says a company head, 'We used to rent out very cheaply, but there was a terrible shortage. Now we're encouraging workers to buy houses.'" Concluding, the article noted that "The consensus is growing that rents are too low. Rents for a family of four averages the equivalent of sixty cents a month." Now, with the reform, houses being put on the market cost anywhere from $13,000 to $41,000, "a momentous sum in a country where the monthly wage averages $25 a month."

All the above goes a long way to explain the general silence by both the Chinese and U.S. media about the "new union movement" which was present in Tiananmen Square with the students. It also explains why though the demonstrations were largely pictured as student dominated, the wrath of the Communist government has been directed primarily against the workers. The bulk of those executed for "crimes" committed during the Spring events were young workers and unemployed men. But labor troubles were only one part of the problem faced in convincing the Chinese masses about the virtues of laissez faire. One of the most deep-seated causes of the present rebellion is the processes that have taken place in the rural areas, following the privatization of land tenure and the commercialization of agriculture. First, a few media-communicated facts as reported by the *Journal of Commerce* (December 8, 1988): "China has already surpassed Australia as an exporter of agricultural products to the East Asia area." The article said that China is making efforts to join GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade), a move which "could have the effect of liberalizing the degree of Chinese state control of foreign trade and encourage the relaxation of the goals of self-sufficiency."

This great expansion in exporting capacity comes as a result of a decade-long process of privatization and commercialization of agriculture, which has had profound structural effects on living conditions in the rural and urban areas. Among the main consequences is the fact that people are being thrown off the land. China is experiencing, possibly on a scale unmatched by any other country, a massive enclosure process. Says *The Economist* (February 18, 1989):

"Now that the prices of so many farming inputs, such as fertilizer and pesticides, are no longer fixed, farmers are facing steeply rising costs. And people are being squeezed off the land, as inheritance practices split family plots into units too small to farm....No wonder, then, that a surplus population of one hundred million unemployed or underemployed peasants should be tempted by the cities, where construction, commerce and the civil service are growing faster than industry. It is thought that the surplus of one hundred will grow to two hundred million by the end of the century. Meanwhile, the government reckons that

China has a floating population of fifty million transients, uprooted peasants who drift in and out of cities without any legal right to be there. It is guessed that on an average day in Shanghai in 1987 there were 1.3 million such people, in Canton one million and in Beijing 1.1 million, half of whom stayed in the capital for at least three months. Even the city officials concede that the transients have their good points, filling casual jobs that might otherwise go begging. But the transients are said to be responsible for a third of urban crime and they help eat up subsidies for food that is meant for permanent residents: 400,000 kilos of vegetables and 130,000 kilos of meat a day in Canton."

The problem is, of course, "the strain on services." Some Chinese economists believe that the only solution is to phase out subsidies and have a "pay as you go" system of services based on the "law of value." *The Economist* continues, "Give those free reign, though, and the likely short-term result is greater income inequalities, higher inflation and urban unrest."

A further consequence of the commercialization of agriculture has been rising prices, such that for the first time since "the Great Leap Forward" Chinese face starvation. In an October 28, 1988, NYT article, it was announced that up to twenty million Chinese are now facing starvation. In May of 1988, indeed, the government lifted the controls from many agricultural prices and "permitted the market to determine the cost of many goods and services." As a result, prices surged dramatically over the summer of 1988 and there was panic buying. Inflation was as high as 50% in some cities. When the government announced that it would soon lift all price controls, many people assaulted the shops. The consequences of the high and continuously rising inflation on living conditions are indicated in several articles, e.g., "Why There Still is Promise in China" (Fortune, Feb. 27, 1989) and "China's Restructuring is Enriching the Peasants but not City Dwellers" (WSJ, Oct. 10, 1988). The latter stated that the standard of living declined 21% in 1987 for city wage earners, causing panic buying, bank runs and even strikes in some state factories. There was rising anger among urban residents against the government. All this indicates that the protests of Spring 1989 were the latest, most explosive expression of a long process of resistance against laissez-faire economics and in this respect is continuous with the other uprisings against IMF "structural adjustment programs" occurring across the Third World. For example, in Venezuela, Argentina, Burma and Nigeria, there were riots and mass demonstrations against price hikes, removal of subsidies and liberalization of the economy in the spring of 1989.

That it was the students who took the initiative is not surprising. There is evidence that students also suffered from the inflationary spiral of the last years. There are veiled references in the media to governmental promises to raise the budget for education. Given the world-wide experience with laissez-faire and liberalization, one can easily imagine the cuts in subsidies and how they have affected the students. It is interesting to note that a May 25, 1989 NYT article, "Aspiring Party Leaders at the Forefront of Revolt," reported that the leaders of the revolt were not the students of the University of Beijing but the more proletarian, less westernized students of the People's University, who were more likely to feel the cuts in subsidies. Another reference to the hardships students faced is also in a May 25, 1989 NYT article, "Canton's Prosperous Students March," where a Cantonese student says that, unlike in Beijing, in Canton students can always find ways of moonlighting to make ends meet. "People can always find an extra job in a hotel or driving a taxi."

Undoubtedly there are among the students some who correspond to the dominant media image: pro-western, anti-communist intellectuals who, of course, suffer most from restrictions on freedom of expression. But, by and large, the media also shows that the student movement in China moves along the same lines as student movements in other parts of the Third World, beginning with the student movements immediately adjacent to China, those of South Korea and Burma.

For example, the Burmese students have used their social position and organizational possibilities to lay the basis of a mass protest against the government and its corruption. For more than a year, they protested alongside workers and the unemployed in the face of massacres and torture. Similarly, the most reverberating demand of the Chinese students has been that voiced by those with the "red eye disease," "End Corruption!" which largely refers to the capitalization of the Chinese Communist Party, i.e., the turning of Communist Party officials into capitalists. This aspect of the protests was played out symbolically as noted by the NYT May 25, 1989 article, "Chinese Take Umbrage at Attack on Mao's Portrait," which mentions that "lately some workers and students have taken to wearing Mao buttons and pins, apparently to suggest their longing for the Maoist days of egalitarianism, honesty and selflessness."

Finally, let us consider two NYT articles that appeared two days after the Beijing massacres, when the question of civil war was being mooted: "Civil War for Army" and "An Army With its own Grievances" (June 6, 1989). The first reported that "all of China's senior officials have had extensive contacts with the American military and have attended courses at American military schools." It continued, "Emerging Chinese military thinking is based on the American model and China's modernization program is largely dependent upon American technology and equipment." Meanwhile, there is discontent among the rank and file. The second article pointed out that the Chinese Army has been ordered to become self-supporting. As a consequence, some units have used their trucks to start transport companies, their repair depots serve as commercial garages and their hospitals admit private paying patients. The article drily reported, "Sometimes ill soldiers have been turned away to cater to patients who can pay...This has created wide-spread demoralization."

Putting together the articles from media available on any well-stocked newsstand in the U.S. makes it possible for the reader to see that the student-worker movement in China is not the last episode of a dying socialism but the first manifestation of the post-socialist anti-capitalist struggle in China. The student protest at Tiananmen Square opened the space for the workers and government to take up their much anticipated confrontation. The U.S. found the repression a welcome and "inevitable" result, for as the media had been commenting in the months prior to the crackdown, the question was not whether the anti-capitalist proletarian demands were to be rejected, the question was how.

On Africa and Self-Reproducing Automata

by George Caffentzis

In the same way we may say that the imperialist states would make a great mistake and commit an unspeakable injustice if they contented themselves with withdrawing from our soil the military cohorts, and the administrative and managerial whose services function it was to discover the wealth of our country, to extract it and to send it off to the mother countries. We are not blinded by the moral reparation of national independence; nor are we fed by it. The wealth of the imperial countries is our wealth too.

-Franz Fanon

The basic principle of dealing with malfunctions in nature is to make their effect as unimportant as possible and to apply correctives, if they are necessary at all, at leisure. In dealing with artificial automata on the other hand, we require immediate diagnosis....The rationale of this difference is not far to seek. Natural organisms are sufficiently well conceived to be able to operate even when malfunctions have set in... Any malfunction, however, represents a considerable risk that some generally degenerating process has already set in within the machine. It is, therefore, necessary to intervene immediately, because a machine which has begun to malfunction has only rarely a tendency to restore itself, and will probably go from bad to worse.

-John von Neumann

The following chain of notes begins with a precise, but apparently theoretic or ideal, consideration: the proper Marxist characterization of self-reproducing automata before they actually have come into existence. This consideration, however, has politico-economic consequences which are immediately relevant to class struggle in general and to Africa in particular.

A. The factory system was capital's response to the stranglehold workers' skill as well as their control and appropriation of constant capital ("customary usages") had on Manufacture and Domestic Industry. But the factory system (the concrete essence of Modern Industry) itself was in turn held up by the power of the manufacturing workers who built the basic machines (steam engines, self-acting mules, etc.) of that system. Only when machines constructed machines, i.e. when the elements of the factory were themselves the products of factories, could the whole system self-reflexively achieve the relative autonomy from workers' antagonism it was designed for.

Automata are complex machines (heat-engines linked to an integrated array of "simple" machines) whose logical and computational operations are themselves mechanized. Thus an automata system (or subsystem) is a factory system (or subsystem) without the "supervisory attendance" of human workers. In response to factory system operatives' struggles in the post-WWII period, capital introduced automata systems and subsystems in assembly line and continuous-process plants. This strategy has been generalized and automata systems have been widely integrated in the circulatory and social accounting circuits of capital. Spot-welding robots, computerized billing and genetically engineered cells excreting valuable chemicals are all widely recognized elements of automata systems or subsystems.

But automata are largely designed and built by skilled mental and manufacturing workers, as well as factory operatives who constitute a new antagonistic stranglehold and technical limit on production of and with automata systems. From the desperate strikes of Filipino women in computer-chip factories to computer programmers designing and releasing computational viruses "for the fun of it," the shadow of the "strife between workmen and machine" still disturbs capital's dream of workerless and struggle-less production.

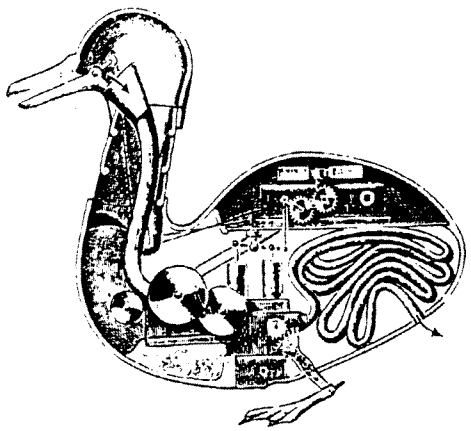
The logical escape from these strangleholds and limits is through self-reflexivity. Only when automata create automata, i.e., when the elements of automata systems become products of automata systems, can "post-modern industry" find its fitting foundation. The ideal type of such automata-creating automata is the self-reproducing automaton (SRA).

AA. Machines have been traditionally defined as "aids to labor," and as a consequence, the product of a worker-machine unit is of necessity less complex than the producing unit itself. For a worker-machine unit could, at best, produce another machine but not another worker. Given the contradictory volatility of workers, capitalist thinkers have always been intrigued by the possibility of creating machines that did not require direct human intervention in their operations, i.e., automata.

AB. But the early machines were not complete automata because an enormous amount of skilled labor went into their production, while their repair and "regeneration" required

further labor. Was it possible to create a total automaton, i.e., one which would—after the first unit—produce itself out of pure "raw materials," as well as repair and regenerate itself, all without human labor inputs? Let us call such total automata "self-reproducing automata" (SRA).

AC. This new ideal of a machine had von Neumann as one of its primitive conceptualizers in the early post-WWII era. No immediate, widely-known model of such automata was available to him, such as the coo-coo clocks and other mechanical "toys," that were the inspiration of so much early capitalist thought. However, as he was working on the mathematical and engineering problems attendant to the production of nuclear weapons, he materially coaxed and theorized the construction of some of the first operational electronic computers. The computers appeared to him as prototypes of SRA for two reasons. First, it was possible to envisage and mathematically describe a computer (called "a universal Turing machine") that literally could "re-create" the operation of any arbitrary computer (including itself). Second, it was even then possible to design computers that would be self-correcting, i.e., capable of diagnosing their own errors and malfunctions and repairing them (within limits).



Vaucanson's Ente, 1738

AD. Von Neumann argued that SRA required four components: (1) raw material, which he called "cells"; (2) a program of instructions; (3) a "factory" that arranges the "cells" according to the program with the proviso that the program is copied in the product itself; (4) a "supervisor" that might receive new "instructions" from the "outside," copies them and transmits them to the "factory." Although at the time of their conceptualization these SRA appeared as "science fiction," the last generation has seen a tendency in capital to approach this ideal in a number of different production environments. Increasingly, computers are used to produce computers, diagnose their errors and repair themselves in assembly lines, satellites and missiles, as well as in "artificially intelligent" robots. Thus the automatization of automation has taken an enormous leap forward. Further, when we consider the petroleum-internal combustion energy cycle (e.g., the increasing automatization of the drilling, transporting and refining of petroleum) as well as the uranium-electricity cycle (e.g., in the recycling of plutonium) we see the increasing automatization extending its tendrils into the "raw materials"stage.

ADA. Von Neumann described the process of self-reproduction in the following words: "There is no great difficulty in giving a complete axiomatic account of how to describe any conceivable automaton in a binary code. Any such description can then be represented by a chain of rigid elements [a program]...Given any automaton X, let f(X) designate the chain which represents X. Once you have done this, you can design a universal machine tool A which, when furnished with such a chain f(X), will take it and gradually consume it, at the same time building up the automaton X from the parts floating around freely in the surrounding milieu. All this design is laborious, but it is not difficult in principle, for it is a succession of steps in formal logic. It is not qualitatively different from the type of argumentation with which Turing constructed his universal automaton." Once one has machine tool A, self-reproduction is an easy next step. For A must have its description, f(A), and f(A) can be fed into A and another A will be produced...without paradox, contradiction or circularity.

AE. Perhaps the most profound exemplar of von Neumann's SRA model is in "genetic engineering." Here all the elements of the SRA are immediately available. Indeed, the merging of automata studies with bio-genetic research points to the possible practical total realization of sra. For the very mechanism of the genetic process (that, according to von Neumann, produces "natural" automata) can itself be mechanized to create specially designed products that replicate themselves.

AF. Thus the SRA is slowly making its way from the "heaven" of the capitalist imagination to the "hell" of the production process. For they seem to fulfill capital's dream of a perpetuum mobile: production *sans* workers and therefore profits without the class struggle. But whose nightmare is this dream?

B. Dreams and nightmares, apocalypses and utopias, they are the poles of a spectrum of social possibility...but whose possibility? Capital, by identifying wealth with value, restricts the logical field of social intercourse to work and its management. From psalm singing in its heaven to furnace stoking in its hell...labor is all it can imagine. Indeed, imagination is labor for it. Are SRA the long awaited evolutionary leap to a labor-less Cockagne or the seventh seal of a millennium of work for work's sake?

BA. At first sight the SRA is a worker's nightmare. For the immediate impact of such SRA is the excision of the power of refusal in the production process, given that SRA continue to be capitalistically controlled means of production. How can you strike against a "factory" that you never stepped foot in and against an employer that employs no one? Thus an SRA industry would appear to have managed a perfect "lock-out."

BAA. Approximations of the SRA "super-lockout" are to be found in many of the recent confrontations of the industrial proletariat with a capital that takes on a dream-like quality, ever receding either spatially to low wage sectors or temporally to higher organically-composed forms of production. The historic collapse of strike activity in the U.S. during the last decade is only one among many omens portending the sra's slouching to capital's Bethlehem to be born. Against such monsters of

technical ingenuity the usual tactics of workers' struggle seem impotent.

BB. But appearances, by definition, deceive. For on analyzing these SRA in the light of traditional Marxist theory we see that they have a number of paradoxical qualities. For example, the value of a product and the organic composition of the system producing it are elementary concepts of analysis. Eschewing refinements, the value of a product is the socially necessary labor-time required for its production as a commodity, while the organic composition of a production system is the ratio of constant to variable capital, i.e., the ratio of the value of the "machinery" to the value of the labor-power employed. In brief, the organic composition of an SRA industry would be infinite while the value of its products tends to zero.

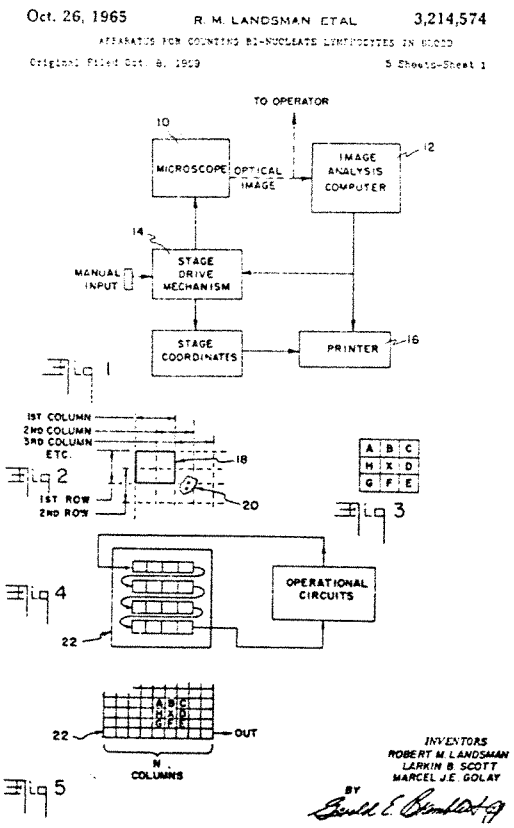
BC. The organic composition of the SRA industry is infinite because by definition SRA produce themselves and thus do not require any labor power in their production, i.e., the variable capital of SRA is zero, and any number divided by zero is infinite (or, perhaps, undefined). The value of SRA tends to zero since the "original capital" of the "parent" SRA gets slowly distributed over the potentially infinite series of its "off spring." Further, the surplus value generated by a commodity (again broadly speaking) is the difference between the value added to the commodity in the production process and the value of the labor-power expended in the production process (added to the product). But again a strange result follows: the surplus value of SRA is zero simply because no labor-power is absorbed in the production of the sra. Already the dream of capital—production and profit without a struggle—begins to invert itself, for such SRA production does not, apparently, produce the surplus value that is essential to capital.

BD. This curious combination of infinity and zero opens a threatening anomaly in the system of capitalist production that must be probed. However, we should not be led astray by the blatant "extremism" of sra. They are, after all, only machines. And the reasons for their introduction are quite explicable in a capitalist society. As the succinct writer of "Prologue to the Use of Machines" puts it: "a worker is replaced by a machine when the cost per unit product of the work is greater than for the machine." Let us take a classical case: moving weights over distances. If it costs $1 to move a 100 lb. weight one mile by machine (on average) then any wage higher than $1 will make the worker "replaceable." Hence the use of the machine as a capitalist weapon in the wage struggle, since it appears to put an absolute and objective limit on wage demands. Two corollaries to this principle in the SRA case are obvious, though they might sound strange: (1) SRA will be produced as commodities by other SRA if and only if the cost of the sra's self-reproduction is less than the wages that must be paid for workers to produce sra; (2) SRA will be used to produce commodity X if and only if the cost of X's SRA production is less than its cost when wage labor is employed.

BE. But there is an allied principle of machine introduction in capitalism that does seem to be violated by sra, viz., the desire to increase relative surplus value. Historically, a great impetus to the introduction of machinery has been working class struggle that achieved reductions in the workday and improvements in working conditions. The immediate impact of such reduction and improvement was a reduction in absolute surplus value, for the boss literally was able to expropriate less labor time when an effective legislative limit was put on, say, the working day. Such reductions in the working day stimulated capitalists to introduce machinery into production that would make labor more productive or intensive or both. The result of such machinery on the system as a whole, especially in producing the means of subsistence, thereby lowering the value the worker consumes, was a reduction of the "necessary" part of the working day (i.e., the labor time involved in creating the value necessary for the reproduction of the worker or, in short, the real wage). If this introduction of machinery succeeds, then the ratio between surplus labor-time and necessary labor-time can increase quite dramatically, even with a reduction in the length of the working day.

The introduction of SRA would appear to violate this principle since their surplus value production is zero and hence their relative surplus value is zero as well. Thus they would appear useless in the accumulation process unless they contribute to the total expanded reproduction of aggregate capital values.

BF. Even if the cost of their self reproduction is less than human production and they do actually increase the general rate of profit, SRA remain paradoxical objects in a capitalistic space. They are like "black holes" or "spacetime singularities" in the manifold of work processes, for they appear to absorb

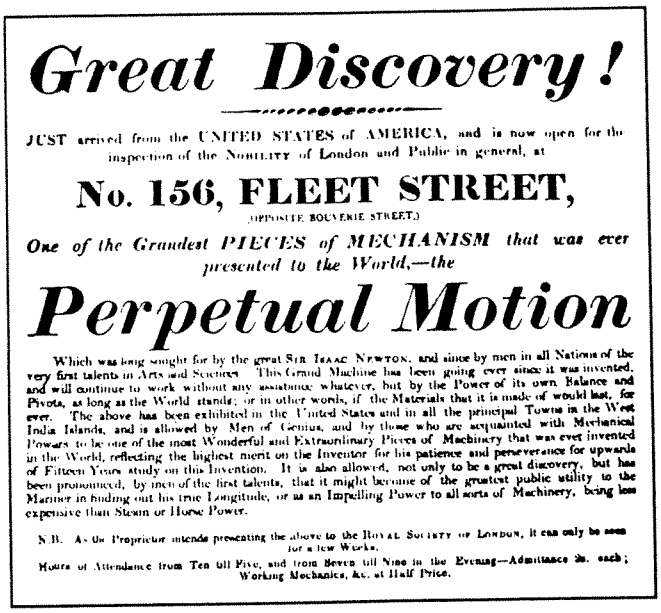


Golay (1969), along with Landsman and Scott of Perkin-Elmer, was the first to patent a cellular logic machine. This machine, reduced to practice as CELLSCAN (Preston, 1961), performed iterative operations on a bilevel image array using a 3x3 kernel. It was capable of performing a connected components analysis and generating the residue histogram.

value but produce none in return. So an SRA industry would be the exact opposite of appearances, instead of being infinitely efficient or productive, it would turn out to be totally "unproductive."

BG. A bit of logic is necessary here. There is a world of difference between "nothing" and "zero." A "nothing" is not a member of a continuum, series or aggregate, but zero definitely is, i.e., it is the precise starting point of the said continuum, series or aggregate. Thus while Marx's "yellow logarithm" is not a number at all, zero certainly is. We cannot conclude that processes producing zero value are unproductive. One might be tempted to put SRA into that miscellaneous closet of "luxury" commodities or "incidental expenses of production," the golden bathtubs and cruise misses of our age. But SRA would not be "incidental" to social production, they might even prove to be "basic commodities" that enter the production cycle of every commodity. Yet, unlike luxury goods that embody surplus value, they would not add one iota of new value.

BH. The logical differentiation of zero from nothing might seem abstract and "semantic," but it goes to the heart of traditional Marxist debates concerning "productive" versus "unproductive" labor. Labor-power that has, or tends to have, zero value (i.e., it is wageless) can be enormously productive of surplus value through the total cycle of value production, while labor power that might appear to have high value might very well prove entirely "unproductive"—contribute nothing to surplus value production. You can no more determine productive labor by paychecks than you can determine value by stopwatches.



Great Discovery!

JUST arrived from the UNITED STATES of AMERICA, and is now open for the inspection of the NOBILITY of London and Public in general, at

No. 156, FLEET STREET,

(OPPOSITE BOUVERIE STREET.)

One of the Grandest PIECES of MECHANISM that was ever presented to the World,—the

Perpetual Motion

Which was long sought for by the great SIR ISAAC NEWTON, and since by men in all Nations of the very first talents in Arts and Sciences. This Grand Machine has been going ever since it was invented, and will continue to work without any assistance whatever, but by the Power of its own Balance and Pivots, as long as the World stands; or in other words, if the Materials that it is made of would last, for ever. The above has been exhibited in the United States and in all the principal Towns in the West India Islands, and is allowed by Men of Genius, and by those who are acquainted with Mechanical Powers to be one of the most Wonderful and Extraordinary Pieces of Machinery that was ever invented in the World, reflecting the highest merit on the Inventor for his patience and perseverance for upwards of Fifteen Years study on this Invention. It is also allowed, not only to be a great discovery, but has been pronounced, by men of the first talents, that it might become of the greatest public utility to the Mariner in finding out his true Longitude, or as an Impelling Power to all sorts of Machinery, being less expensive than Steam or Horse Power.

N.B. As the Proprietor intends prosecuting the above to the ROYAL SOCIETY OF LONDON, it can only be seen for a few Weeks.

Hours of Attendance from Ten till Five, and from Seven till Nine in the Evening—Admittance 1s. each; Working Mechanics, &c. at Half Price.

BI. There is a further connection of SRA and Marxist theory. For in some of his most crucial revolutionary passages, Marx was preoccupied with the stage of production that would usher in sra. Consider those passages in the *Grundrisse* and *Capital* where Marx envisages the limit of the relative surplus value generation process driven by working class struggle and implementing the sciences directly in production. At this limit Marx sees not a nightmare for the workers but a catastrophe for capital itself. In this marxist analysis, von Neumann's SRA embody the exact limits of the accumulation process where the whole system of value production "explodes." Now we come to a dichotomy: are first impressions right and SRA will be a worker's nightmare, or is Marx right in claiming that the nightmare will be one for the nightmare owner?

C. Let us say a particular object or condition is useful to someone, or even more strongly, let us say it is essential to human species existence. Surely that object or condition is an aspect of human wealth but this fact does not confer value on it. An SRA industry could be extremely useful to some and it might begin an epochal process of inter-species evolution...BUT for individual capitalists qua embodiments of capital the matter of usefulness or species existence is beside the point. For them the SRA riddle is simply put: can SRA "make money" for the SRA owners?

CA. To answer this question we must first adjust von Neumann's vision, for it contains a hidden presupposition: SRA are (or would be) commodities. But that presupposition is debatable. Surely if SRA are commodities, then the SRA industry becomes part of the total commodity production "tree," i.e., the SRA "branch." If, however, these SRA remain outside the logic of commodities and become something like a new "bio-mechanical" species that can be used by anyone without exchange, then why should capitalists own or produce them at all? Clearly if SRA are not commodities then the riddle would solve itself, so let us assume that SRA become commodities at some stage in the process of capitalist development.

CB. If SRA are commodities then they must have a price, i.e., they must be bought and sold for some exchange value. But how can they have a definitive price when in the long run they have virtually zero value? Again we confront an apparent paradox, but one that is easily resolved. For capitalism is exactly the system where price generally does not equal value in the first place; in fact, it is only in very rare circumstances that price is identical to value. In most situations values must be "transformed" into prices in order for the total capitalist system of production to reproduce itself, either simply or on an expanded scale. Many commentators on Marxist theory take the "transformation of values into prices of production" as a "problem" because Marx was not able to elegantly carry out the mathematics of the transformation in the simple models that he presented in *Capital* vol. III. They seem to forget that the concept of "transformation" Marx uses is a special case of a general and profound feature of life in capitalist society, where nothing is left literally "as is." One of the great fascinations (and terrors) of the system is its need for a continual interchange, flow, appearance and disappearance of its components. The transformation of values into prices is one vital aspect of capital's appearance-disappearance process. It is this transformation that can help us explain how a capitalist can make a profit from a commodity that embodies no surplus value.

CC. In the process of the transformation of values into prices, commodities produced in high organic composition industries have prices greater than their values while commodities produced in low organic composition industries have prices less than their values. This trick is accomplished by the transposition (in the market or by "administered" prices) of surplus value "generated" in the "low" industries into the "high" industries. The capitalists of the SRA industry (the top-most

branch of the tree of production) would get their profit sustenance from the tree's gnarled, earth-pressed roots. Thus profits can and must be expropriated without exploiting any workers directly if the SRA industry is to exist.

CD. Let us put the point concerning the profitability of an SRA industry in a more precise form. The value of a commodity is the sum of its constant capital (c), variable capital (v) and its surplus value (s), but the price of production is determined by c, v, and r, the average rate of profit which acts as a cybernetic stabilizer for the total capitalistic system in its reproduction. The value, L, of a commodity is therefore:

$L=c+v+s,$

while the price of production, P, of a commodity is

$P=c+v+r(c+v).$

The "extremism" of SRA lie in that for them $v=s=0$, $L=c$, and $P=c+rc$. Clearly P cannot equal L, indeed $P-L=rc$, but where does this "rc" come from? Since machines cannot produce value per se the profit in an SRA industry must ultimately come from the famous "sweat and toil" in the "lower" branches and "roots" of the production tree. Hence it is a "pure" profit that derives from the perverse logic of capitalist "justice" requiring that all investment in capital get a "fair" return. This justice simply becomes almost divine in the case of SRA.

CE. What a situation! A branch of capitalist industry that produces no surplus value but absorbs a potentially huge profit. This is only paradoxical to those who think that profits accrue to those who directly exploit. But this is no more true than the presumption that workers who produce the most surplus value get the highest wages. If anything, the exact opposite holds.

CF. Perhaps one might classify SRA capitalists as pure "rentiers," but no, for their industry "produces" something and their return is not based upon some naturally given scarcity. They are no more rentiers than capitalists who control a hypothetical industry producing and selling dirt. Indeed, by its "self-reproducing" status the industry's products are continually growing in mass.

CG. How big is their profit? It is proportional (more or less) to the on-going average profit rate and the size of c, the part of the constant capital in the SRA industry which is used in the construction of an SRA unit, which might not be trifling. On the contrary, the investment required to actually reach this "ideal" machine industry is enormous, perhaps astronomical. Any reasonable attempt to imagine such an enterprise in actuality must result in a titanic expenditure. Therefore the industry's existence presupposes an enormous absorption of surplus value at whatever the on-going profit rate. Indeed, if the capitalist system is compelled into creating such an industry, it would be like a gambler staking all his/her "chips" on a rather risky bet.

CGA. The move into atomic power plants in the post-WWII can give a hint of such "risks." In response to the struggles of the coal miners of the US and the nationalist movements in the oil-producing countries the capitalist system viewed the production of extremely high organic composition forms of energy production requiring enormous investment as an acceptable "risk." The result has been the devaluation of hundreds of billions of dollars of investment when the gamble proved unprofitable.

D. The introduction of an SRA industry will require a immense re-structuring of the international form of commodity production, requiring an ever greater "economic" distance between the "bottom" and "top" branches of the world's value production tree. This re-structuring will not happen "naturally." Rather, a fatal violence whose proportions are hard now to reckon is on the capitalist agenda. Whenever fatality on these dimensions is proposed, the riskiness of the bet is evident.

DA. But this "bet" is not made in an instant. There is an approximate approach, both in terms of investment and conditions of return, in the tendential growth of organic composition in the branches of production tending to the SRA limit. The way this approximate approach first forces itself into recognition is in a radical change in the price structure of commodities. For any large-scale leap in the organic composition of an industry or the system as a whole, especially one that tends to infinity, must "drain" more from the lower branches and roots of the tree (where by "roots" I mean those branches of production where c and v tend to zero). The mechanism of this "draining" and "sapping" is the transformation of prices into values.

Parameters for return on investment example

Investment in robot and accessories I = $55,000
Annual depreciation, eight years, straight line = $ 6,875
Hourly cost of robot upkeep = $ 1.3
Annual savings resulting from robot = $ S
Number of working days per year = 250
Robot replaces one human operator
Return on investment (ROI) = $\frac{S \times 100}{I}$ per cent

	8 hours per day operation		16 hours per day operation	
A *Robot costs*	$		$	
Annual depreciation	6,875		6,875	
Annual upkeep	2,600		5,200	
Total annual robot costs	9,475		12,075	
B *Corresponding labor costs*				
Wages, including fringes, at:				
$ 8 per hour	16,000		32,000	
10 per hour	20,000		40,000	
12 per hour	24,000		48,000	
15 per hour	30,000		60,000	
C *Annual cost savings and ROI*				
$ 8 per hour	6,525	ROI = 11.9%	19,925	ROI = 36.2%
10 per hour	10,525	19.1%	27,925	50.6%
12 per hour	14,525	26.4%	35,925	65.3%
15 per hour	20,525	37.3%	47,925	87.1%

Example of Return on Investment Calculation

DB. This transformation of relative prices must be such that the low or zero organic composition branches and roots will discover low and lower relative prices, while the sra-tending branches will experience high and higher relative prices. For other things being equal, if the organic composition of one industry increases while the organic composition of the other remains the same, the price of the first will increase with respect to the price of the second. This is just a mathematical constraint on a system whose aim is the accumulation of value.

DC. This widespread disturbance of relative prices and an ever more excruciating sapping of the surplus value extracted at the "bottom" of the tree of production is, I believe, what Marx was referring to in his "explosion" remarks in the *Grundrisse*. He worked out many of the details in *Capital* to the point that the mechanism is simplicity itself. As the "cost" of labor-power in "real wages" is increased and the working day reduced through working class struggle, the dominant capitalist response is a dramatic "restructuring" of production. But where is the capital for this investment in higher organic composition

industries to come from? Clearly in the transformation of relative prices and the ever-widening and deepening absorption of surplus value throughout the world. For workers at the bottom, or kicked to the bottom, this means in most cases increased exploitation in an absolute sense (e.g., increased work day) and decreased wages, since the "profits" of the "low" capitalist might have to come from the necessary labor-time of the worker.

DD. There is a temporal aspect to this relative price transformation as well, which is seen most starkly in our SRA ndustry. As was pointed out previously the value of SRA units tends to zero. This is just the mathematical conclusion from the following premises: the series of SRA is potentially infinite while the "initial" capital, C, is finite (though C can be quite large). But

C/n———>0

as

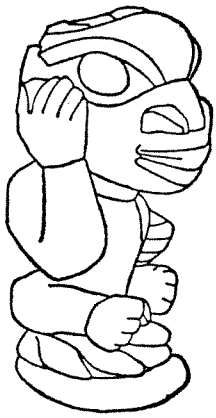
n————>OO,

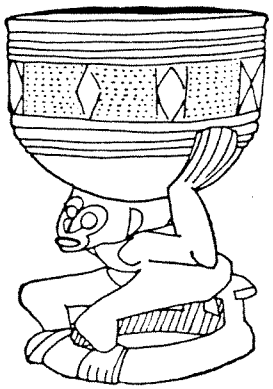
where n is the number of SRA produced.

The capitalist, however, does not live in mathematical eternity. He will not be content to have human, even capitalist, posterity accrue "his" return. He will want a return on his investment, with "fair profit" of course, within a reasonable period of time. But the turnover time of his constant capital is literally infinite. There must therefore by a temporal dilation in the period of return, for instead of getting back his C+rC in an infinite time he will need to get it back in a finite, indeed, a relatively short time, or he will not make the investment. Let us say that given the conditions of turnover throughout the system investment will not be made in an SRA industry unless the return takes place in a century. Let us say, however, that only ten SRA are allowed to be produced "profitably" every year. Then the price of the SRA must average C+rC/1000, which will be quite large compared to the real value in them. This "guaranteeing" of profits within a fixed period of time will further intensify the pressure of expropriation on the "bottom."

DE. This situation, presaging and stepping into the period of the sra, is an "extreme" version of the average response of capitalism to a threat to its current average rate of profit. However, the radicality of the present period lies in the "extremism" of capital's approach and in the breadth and depth of the wage reduction it requires, on the one side, while on the other, the working class possesses an enormous actual and potential knowledge of struggle which can accelerate the circulation of struggle to an unprecedented extent.

DF. This leap of capital's organic composition is therefore exceptionally crucial for Africa (because it generally is at the bottom of the accumulation hierarchy) and is reminiscent of the situation a century before: for the Berlin conference of 1885, which organized the rules of the game of the exploitation of Africa, was an essential step in the formation of Tayloristic production. Since Africa is at the bottom of the wage scale and at the top of the absolute exploitation index, it becomes central to capital's adventures in this period. If capital cannot intensify its wage reduction and absolute exploitation here, it cannot escape a level of catastrophic confrontation in the "higher branches" of production (with all due qualifications).





DG. The "debt crisis," the U.S. budget deficit, the ever "worsening" terms of trade for Third World commodities beginning in the 1970s and intensifying in the 1980s, all reveal symptoms of the strains and imperatives of transformation. The infamous IMF conditionalities and austerity programs simply spell out the role Africa is to play in the transformation.

DH. Thus for Africa "the consensus" is that wages are too high, that the urbanization of the African proletariat has led to a concentration of class power that was and is too dangerous for a system which is not "productive enough." Knowing the conditions of Lagos, one might be amazed at the perversity of those who would argue that the Lagosian's average wage is "high." Yet "high" is a relative term, relative to a standard, and the standard is relative to a perceived sense of proportion. For the IMF, Keynes' world-historical contribution to the sphere of capitalist institutions, the "highness" of African wages is obvious. Thus the "back to the land" programs, the threats and realities of starvation, the high food and "commodity prices, the appeals to a "self-reliant" poverty, and a return to the notion of an "appropriate technology" of the neolithic period (at best).

DI. Capital must repropose, therefore, a ferocious period of original accumulation for Africa, with the final expropriation of the remaining communal lands from Ethiopia across to Nigeria and down to Zimbabwe.

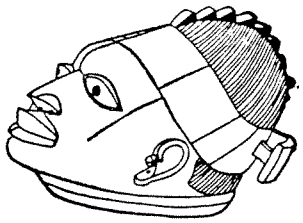
E. This chain of notes from SRA to Africa, from the ideal limiting top of contemporary capitalist production to its real sustaining bottom, poses a deep riddle of strategy for the African proletariat. A riddle intensified by the peculiar "convergence" of Left and Right in this period. Both are agreed that the expectations of African youth are too high, that the level of "indiscipline," "petit-bourgeois behavior," "laziness," "backwardness," "anti-sociality" of the average African urban worker

and peasant is too contradictory with "historical and economic reality." Of course one speaks of "lack of class consciousness" while the other of "lack of achievement motivation" and when one speaks of "autarky" the other recommends "domestic inputs." However, both conclude that Africa must wait out this century and a good deal of the next until it is ready either for "true capitalism" or "true socialism." Understanding this agreement of perspective makes it clear that much of what might appear as a "sell-out" by a left- (right-) winger to say, the IMF (Soviet Union), can make much sense from the logic of Left's (Right's) position per se. As a consequence, much political analysis of Africa remains on the level of "moralism," for if one cannot change values then the natural course is to idealize them.

EA. Yet to accept such assumptions and strategies, even from a "well meaning" perspective that wishes to do "right by the people," is to collaborate in the condemnation of the African proletariat to the deprivation of the possibilities that objectively exist for a level of production and social intercourse that is unprecedented in human history. For these assumptions and strategies of the Left and Right functionalize and ration these possibilities only to the most select social sectors of "comrades" or "good old boys." One can only presume that the

"instability" of governments of both the Left and Right in Africa, and the often inchoate political violence (frequently dismissed as "tribal," "ethnic" or "religious") that characterizes the continent at present, has a clear and rational base in the mass perception that these objective possibilities of production and intercourse are being repressed across the ideological spectrum.

EB. It should be obvious that the logic of these notes point to a totally different direction. It should also not be surprising that this direction is parallel not with the "scientific socialist realists'" strategies but with the arguments of Fanon. For in Fanon one finds simultaneously a total rejection of capitalist values (which in the mystified form are aggregated into "Western Civilization") with an equally uncompromising strategy of reappropriation. Fanon's argument is simply a forceful application of a Marxist truism, viz., the accumulated wealth, both cultural and physical, of the "advanced capitalist world" is simply the transformation of the labor of Africans which must be returned by, as Malcolm X used to say, any means necessary. As Silvia Federici explained in her essay "Journey to the Native Land," for Fanon much of the "true history" of Africa is in Europe and the Americas (as, indeed, most of the "true history" of Europe and America is scarred in Africa). It is only by the reappropriation of that wealth and "true history" that Africans can escape the toil, misery and wretchedness that is now programmed for them.



EC. This is neither the place nor the hour to discuss the mechanisms of reappropriation but only its logic and consequences. Thus we argue that without an enormous return of social technique and wealth into the African continent and on Africans' terms, all efforts at "self-help," "self-reliance," "autarky," "living within our means," "substituting domestic inputs," etc., will lead to a further isolation of the African proletariat from the rest of the planet in a period when the very need for world accumulation based upon the most "primitive" forms of exploitation is reaching a peak. "A "self-reliance" strategy plus SRA creates a disastrous conjuncture, to say the least, and not only for the African.

ED. The ability to decrease African wages and increase absolute exploitation in Africa is a necessary condition for the success of capital's project of renewal in this period. This project, provoked by the international wage "explosion" and profits "crisis" of the late 1960s and early 1970s, and put into motion in 1973, has been extraordinarily successful (except for a few set-backs in 1979-80). At the moment, resistance to this project at the "higher branches" of production seems muted at best. Attention turns to the "roots" of the tree, for as any logician will tell you, the failure of a necessary condition of a project is a sufficient condition of the failure of the project.

Endnotes

The original "Notes" (1986) comprised all those paragraphs beginning with two capital letters. The ones beginning with one or three capital letters were added in 1989.

Bibliography

Rene Descartes, *Discourse on the Method of Rightly Conducting Reason* (1637).

Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, vols. I-III (1867-1895).

John Von Neumann, *Theory of Self-reproducing Automata* (edited and completed by Arthur W. Burks) (1966).

Ian Steedman, et al., *The Value Controversy* (1981).

Midnight Notes, "Prologue to the Use of Machines," *Computer State Notes* (1982).

Isaac Asimov and Karen A. Frenkel, *Robots: Machines in Man's Image* (1985).

The Struggle Against Enclosures in Jay, Maine

An Account of the 1987-88 Strike Against International Paper

By David Riker

Old Elihu gave them what he had to give them, and bided his time. In 1921 it came. Business was rotten. Old Elihu didn't care whether he shut down for a while or not. He tore up the agreements he had made with his men and began kicking them back into their pre-war circumstances. Of course the help yelled for help. Bill Quint was sent out from I.W.W. headquarters in Chicago to give them some action. He was against a strike, an open walk-out. He advised the old sabotage racket, staying on the job and gumming things up from the inside. But that wasn't enough for the Personville crew. They wanted to put themselves on the map, make labor history. They struck.

— Dashiell Hammett, *Red Harvest* (1929)

Introduction

In June of 1987, 1250 union paperworkers in Jay, Maine went on strike against International Paper (IP), the world's largest paper company and the largest private landowner in the United States. The strike was organized against the company's attempt to impose a new contract that would have cut jobs, reduced wages, ended the closed shop, and radically transformed existing working practices.

For sixteen months the paperworkers remained on strike. Fewer than 5% crossed the picket line. But in the end the strike was defeated. Not only did the workers lose the old contract that had provoked the long battle, but they lost their jobs as well. The entire workforce was replaced with scabs in a highly organized national strikebreaking mobilization.

The union's strategy was a defensive one, aimed at preserving a deal that already existed and was now under attack. The fact that IP launched its attack in the form of a new contract had suggested that the issue could be resolved through collective bargaining. But the contract was not negotiable. Collective bargaining was already a thing of the past.

The strike signalled the end of a relationship which had existed in Jay for nearly half a century. It had been based on a set of mutual guarantees that provided stability for both the paper-

workers and the company. IP was guaranteed reliable and industrious workers, who in turn were guaranteed secure jobs that payed the highest wages in the area. It was a privileged deal which was both envied and resented by other workers in Maine.

IP's ability to terminate the deal in Jay depended on two factors: automation inside the mill, and poverty outside. The first had been produced through more than a decade of enormous capital investment.

The second, poverty, is widespread in the state of Maine, and had become more acute as a result of the systematic wage depression which began in 1973. On a national level, average weekly real wages have been driven down more than 15% during this period. As a result, the Jay mill was not only surrounded by trees, but also by workers whose average wage had been driven to below subsistence.

In October 1989, at a meeting more than a thousand miles from Jay, union officials terminated the strike. The people in Jay were not consulted or given a vote. Many first heard the news on the radio. The local union leadership justified its action as a bid to save the Jay community, but it more clearly reflected a crisis in the union and a deliberate attempt to save itself.

Immediately, like a conditioned reflex, everyone from Wall Street analysts to various "labor experts" and "observers" began writing post-mortems. The defeat, we were told, was yet more proof that the very tactic of a strike had shown its futility and should finally be abandoned as the obsolete tool that it is. But like all obituaries, theirs had already been written before the strike had even begun.

Unlike that army of undertakers, our starting point is that there is a lot to learn from the experiences in Jay. But this requires that we understand what type of strike this was, under what conditions it developed, what its major turning points were, and how it ended.

The destruction of the deal in Jay links the paperworkers to a wider class experience in the 1980s. For unionized workers, the decade began with the mass sacking and replacement of more than 11,000 air traffic controllers. It closed with unionized coal miners ten months on strike and scab miners digging coal. The age of the guaranteed job is over. In its place, those workers who had enjoyed it are experiencing the New Enclosures.

The Paper Industry

Prior to the 1880s, rags were the principal raw material used in making paper. Most paper mills in the United States were therefore located close to the large eastern seaboard cities which were both principal markets as well as chief sources of raw material. In the 1880s, all this was changed with the ascendancy of wood pulp as the most common raw material. Trees, besides being the lungs of the earth and the source of wood for home building and heat, were accorded a new use.

The paper industry is based on the control of land and the "preservation" of forests. More than thirty percent of the entire land mass of the United States is classified as forest land, the largest single category of land use. Over two-thirds of the country's forests are commercial timberlands, of which 60 percent are industry owned.

International Paper owns 8 million acres in the United States, and twenty million worldwide. This is roughly two-thirds the size of England. Unlike the rain forest in Brazil, the amount of land used for tree farming in North America has been increased this century.

Half a million workers are employed in paper mills in the United States. More than this number work in the related lumber and wood products industry in logging camps, sawmills and planeing mills. With over a million production workers, more than 500 paper mills, and annual revenues in excess of $100 billion, paper is one of the largest industries in the country. Eighty percent of the workers work for the largest 15 companies. Ten of these companies account for almost 80 percent of total industry production.

Paper mills contain as much as $2 million of fixed capital per worker. At a newly automated paper machine today, a few hundred workers produce more paper than 3,000 workers produced ten years ago at more than a dozen machines. A single machine can require a building 700 feet long, 200 feet wide and 75 feet high. It will run paper at more than 40 miles per hour. The age of the papermaker/craftsman with a sensitive touch and a list of pulp ingredients in the back pocket is a thing of the past.

The paper industry is in a period of expansion. Annual per capita consumption of paper products in the United States is close to 400 pounds. A 1986 industry study projected that demand for paper in the United States will increase 25% in the ten years 1985 - 1995, mainly as the result of the widespread use of computers and copiers. Just as credit never replaced cash, so too the vision of a paperless office in the computer age never materialized.

Maine

Well , actually if you don't work for a big company like IP or the remaining shoeshops, you either work in the paper industry at one level or another, either cutting wood or actually making paper, or you're in the service industry — McDonalds, or hair styling.[1]

In Maine, the paper industry has dominated the economy throughout this century. It has preserved the state as one enormous timberland, a one crop economy based on the profitable extraction of pulpwood. Ninety percent of the land is forested of which all but five percent is commercial land. Seven companies own virtually all the industry's land and produce 90 percent of all pulp and paper in the state.

Water has always been important for the paper industry, first for power, then for transportation, and always in the manufacturing process. The industry has maintained control over Maine's rivers and streams, but because the manufacturing process contaminates, many of the rivers are either dead or dying. Paper companies own and operate most of the state's dams, controlling where water will flow and who will have access to it.

More than forty percent of the value of manufacturing product in the state is produced in the paper and wood products industries. The backbone of these are the state's 18 pulp and paper mills. The number of mill workers however is relatively small (18,000). This fact underlies both the relatively high wages which they are paid, and their central importance within the state's industrial landscape.

The Workers

I had a bleeding ulcer and I had to be operated on. And I think that a lot of shift work brings that on. It takes years but you know, a lot of people in this town retired but didn't live six months.

Most of the 1250 workers who went on strike were third and fourth generation paperworkers. They were mainly descendants of French Canadian workers who had emigrated to Maine at the turn of the century to work in the pulp and paper mills. Their connection to IP stretched back eighty years. Before the strike, the workers had an average of nearly thirty years working for IP; many had worked at the mill since finishing high school.

They had never been on strike, having remained industrious throughout the industrial battles in the 1940s and again in the 1960s. In fact, the last strike in Jay was in 1921 and exists only in the form of scattered memories. In 1965, when IP made the enormous capital investment in Jay to build what was then one of the world's largest papermills, it made this investment because of the reliability as well as the skills of the workers.

The work is dangerous, especially because chemicals are used throughout the production process, and illness and injury rates are high. In Maine, papermill workers file for the largest percentage of the state's workers' compensation pay.

They work long hours, the longest official average work week in Maine. Sixty hour weeks were not at all uncommon, and many tell stories of working 18, 20 and 24-hour shifts "to cover for a friend" or generally help out at the mill.

The mill was organized around the "Southern Swing", a rotating shift that effectively divided the town into three. The complexity of the shift and the fact that it is always changing means that it is very difficult to plan on anything. To an outsider, its underlying "swing" seems incomprehensible. Here a worker describes the swing after more than a year of being on strike:

Okay, let's see if I can remember now. Let's start with the day shift, 7-3. It runs seven days. You would start your day shift on a Saturday. You work Saturday, Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and then Friday. Then you've got what's called a long weekend. You get Saturday, Sunday, Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday. So that's your long weekend, once a month. So you've got five days off, you go in at 11 o'clock at night. Wednesday night you go in at 11 o'clock, you work seven days of 11-7 and then the following Tuesday morning you get out and then you get Wednesday and Thursday off. So you get off — really Wednesday's not a day off because you've worked all night long and then at 7 o'clock in the morning, "Okay - it's your day off" — that's bullshit. So you get Wednesday and Thursday off anyway. Friday you start 3-11. 3 o'clock in the afternoon until 11 o'clock at night. A lot of people like that shift. And then you work around and you get until that Thursday. Then you get Friday off. Then you start the day shift on Saturday...You live for that long weekend.

But as the wife of a striker explains, even the long weekend has its problems:

Okay, my husband, when he came off his third shift there, they had their long weekend which starts on a Friday night. He didn't feel himself until the next Tuesday, and he was going back to work that Wednesday, the next day. It would take quite a few days to come back, you know, to feel normal again more or less. So this three shifts is a killer. And on the third shift, to go to sleep in the days, it would take him at least three days to sleep normally again, and by that time you're almost ready to go back on the other shift. It's no good for your health. We had one weekend a month and that was the only time he had time off, but he was too tired to do anything. So you got the money but you ain't got the time to do anything.

Many of the workers used the term "dedication" for what would ordinarily be called overtime. They were dedicated paper workers. One explained, "I think I went fourteen years where I'd only taken two days off." Others said, "We used to call the company Mother IP." But this dedication was given in return for a secure job with a living wage in a state where the average annual family income ($ 15,000) falls below the government poverty level.

Jobs in the logging industry, the shoe plants, the small textile mills, and in the service industries generally paid less than half the wages earned at the papermill. Many people in the surrounding area had applied for work in the mill but were never hired.

In 1948, the paperworkers in Jay agreed to work Sundays, allowing the company to introduce continuous production. In return, they demanded and received double time. In the 1960s, when the new mill was built and then continually expanded, the workers demanded and received continually rising wages. In a six year period alone, the contracts negotiated at the Jay mill brought a 61 percent wage rise. Though the work was difficult and dangerous, it was part of a deal that both the company and the workers wanted to preserve.

$1,000 REWARD

For information leading to the arrest and conviction of persons responsible for the beatings of replacement workers of the Boise Cascade Mill in Rumford.

Call:
Maine State Police 1-800-482-0730
Oxford County Sheriff's Dept. 364-8942
Or your local Police Dept.

COALITION FOR CHANGE offers membership to all replacement workers interested in diverting their union dues to charity and the possibility of forming another union.
COALITION FOR CHANGE does not offer articles or services for sale as rumored.

COALITION FOR CHANGE
P.O. Box 275
Rumford, Maine 04276

We are here to stay!

Roots of The Strike

Elihu Willsson carefully pulled the covers up over his legs again, leaned his head back on the pillows, screwed his eyes up at the ceiling, and said, 'Hm-m-m, so that's the way it is, is it?'"
Red Harvest

In the spring of 1987, the paperworkers were anxious to avoid a strike. The summer before, workers at another papermill less than thirty miles up river had gone on strike. The Rumford mill was owned by Boise Cascade, another of the country's largest paper companies. The Jay union supported the Rumford strike financially but few workers made direct contact or gave physical support. By and large, despite its relative closeness, most Jay workers experienced the strike only on television.

Nonetheless, the events were quickly remembered when Jay was faced with a similar contract offer a year later. Despite violent confrontations at the picket line when the company first hired scabs on a so-called "permanent" basis, it ended after eleven weeks with the signing of the company's original contract offer. 342 of the 1600 workers had been replaced by scabs and several hundred union members had crossed the picket line.

The workers in Jay were so anxious to avoid a strike that they offered to extend their existing contract for two years. But International Paper had no intention of negotiating, nor had its plans been hastily assembled.

In 1976, IP initiated a corporate restructuring program aimed at doubling its return on equity to 15%. More than $8 billion was earmarked for the program which was scheduled for completion in 1988. This involved shutting down some paper machines, closing some mills, and selling-off still others. Integral to IP's plans was the complete dismantling of the nation-wide union bargaining unit to which most of the primary mills were tied. This "multiple", as it was called, gave the union a powerful means for coordinating action at mills throughout the IP system.

In 1965, the company offered to pay a higher wage rate at the newly built Jay mill if Jay's Local 14 left the multiple. Local 14 agreed and was rewarded with the highest wages in the IP system.

In 1979, most of IP's primary mills were still negotiating contracts in a multiple. IP threatened to closed down mills that remained in the multiple and promised increased investment in those that withdrew. By 1985 the multiples had been completely dismantled. Thus, in place of collective bargaining, it had substituted 'corrective bargaining', successfully dividing its primary mills by contract language, term of agreement and expiration date.

In the spring of 1987, when Local 14 was scheduled to negotiate, every primary mill in the IP system was negotiating separately. The average number of man-hours required to make a ton of paper in an IP mill had been reduced from 4.3 to 3.4 between 1981 and 1986.

David Riker

The Androscoggin Mill, Jay, Maine: 365 days a year

The Contract

The contract which IP offered Local 14 was aimed at transferring complete control over the production process to the company. Briefly, it involved four basic components:

First, intensification of work through so-called flexibility, meaning that workers must be prepared to work wherever the boss sends them. This dismantling of job classifications has paralleled the introduction of new technology as two basic strategies aimed at regaining control over the shop floor. "Flexibility" in the auto industry resulted in the record profits in 1985 and 1986.

Second, lengthening of work through the elimination of the Christmas holiday shutdown. For the past forty years, Christmas had been the only time that the Jay mill and the swing shift had come to a standstill.

Third, doing away with the closed shop through the contracting-out of maintenance work to non-union contractors.

Fourth, the reduction of pay through the elimination of premium pay for Sundays and holidays. The union claimed the contract as a whole translated into an immediate pay cut of 12% over two years. 178 jobs would be "lost" and another 320 or so would become non-union. In all, the union stood to lose nearly half its membership and dues.

MILL WORKERS WANTED
In anticipation of a labor dispute, International Paper Company will accept applications for potential full-time permanent and temporary employment at its Androscoggin Mill in Jay, Maine, on Tuesday, June 9, and Wednesday, June 10, 1987. Applicants will be considered for production employment only. Qualified individuals should be interested in working in a team environment with flexible work rules. Entry level wage rate is $9.29/hr. Excellent benefit package included. Top production rates in the mill run over $19.50/hr. Apply in person at the Mill beginning at 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. No applications for maintenance will be accepted. No applications by mail and no telephone inquiries please.
INTERNATIONAL PAPER COMPANY
ANDROSCOGGIN MILL
JAY, MAINE 04239
An Equal Opportunity Employer

Resistance to IP's plan began in February 1987 when workers at IP's primary mill in Mobile, Alabama rejected an essentially identical contract offer. The company responded with a lock-out. Faced with the same concessionary offer, local union officials from the Jay mill as well as mills in Lockhaven, Pennsylvania, and DePere, Wisconsin met at the headquarters of the United Paperworkers International Union (UPIU). They formed a "pool" and agreed to urge their respective members to strike as part of a concerted action. By the end of June 1987, 3,500 workers were on strike or locked-out at four IP locations. In Jay, the strategy of coordinated action was a major factor in the workers' decision to strike. The vote to strike was almost unanimous and on June 16, 1987, the first strike in over sixty years was begun.

Workers' Power on The Last Shift

If a girl's got something that's worth something to somebody, she's a boob if she doesn't collect.

Red Harvest

Before the strike had even begun, IP had placed ads in all the area papers offering "permanent" production jobs at the Jay mill. Immediately, workers set up picket lines to stop scabs from entering the mill during a week of interviews. Additionally, IP had brought in B,E, & K, the pulp and paper industry's largest contractor and a professional strikebreaking firm.

A power plant worker explains, *"I worked the last shift. Three o'clock in the morning each one of us had a scab with us. Or a salary help. The guy watched every move you made. If you went into the restroom, he went with you. Anything you done, he went with you."*

Under these "siege" conditions, the rank and file responded with a sabotage action that effectively shut down the mill for the first week of the strike, the only time in the sixteen month long battle that the mill would be shut down. It was achieved by action inside the mill that appears to have surprised the union officials as much as the company.

Workers on the last shift cut the screen on one of the five paper machines, damaged many of the paper rollers by tossing nuts and bolts into them, drained a total of 90,000 gallons of oil from sludge trucks, used rocks and debris to block the flumes that carry unground logs, forced a shutdown of the power plant, and removed labels which show machine adjustment and calibration levels. Over 135 feet of perimeter fence was taken down the same night by someone driving a logging skidder. The mill was shutdown the following day and it was a week before all of the paper machines could be started. The company claimed that $ 5 million worth of damage was caused.

The mill began the strike with 200 salaried personnel from the Jay mill, 225 "flying" salaried scabs from over 20 other IP mills, and 225 B,E, & K "maintenance" scabs. After two weeks the first group of locally hired scabs arrived. There were about a hundred of them who drove up to the mill gates on the morning of June 29.

When the scabs arrived, they were met by 1,000 pickets

intending to shut the mill down completely. The shift change took more than two hours and half a dozen cars had their windows broken. The day's picketing suggested anything but that it was the start of a sixteen month-long protracted battle.

In fact it precipitated a crisis, both for IP and for the union, as neither controlled the event. IP responded by seeking an injunction in court. In turn, Local 14 insisted that an injunction was not necessary because the union was quite capable of policing its own pickets.

The UPIU's area vice president went a step further, reassuring journalists that it would "pick out trouble makers": "We've been stressing it and stressing it and stressing it - no violence and no hitting the cars...We were telling people to stay back, because the greater the numbers, the worse the chance of this getting out of control. And we don't want that. We're concerned about the safety of the people, scabs and anyone else. We don't want to see anybody get hurt."

The next day, sixty Maine state riot police were brought in to supplement the local force, but within a week they were not needed. The company won an injunction limiting the picket to 12 people at each gate, but this too was hardly needed after a week. By the end of the first week of July, a local paper quoted one of the union members, a "picket line captain," as saying: "The situation is back under control. Police have nothing but good to report."

A decisive turning point had occurred in which the union succeeded in asserting control over the direction of the strike. The sabotage and the mass pickets had both broken unspoken conventions of collective bargaining. They represented two aspects of a rank and file strategy to win the strike. Both were directed at stopping production. The victory of the union was a defeat for the workers. By not physically stopping production at the mill the pickets became symbolic. The strike would now be "legal". It would be a long haul.

The Scab

It don't make any difference if they ain't making good paper. The IP has proved their point. They got their people that is making paper. Same thing is going to happen to Pittston. They got their people that are mining coal. As long as they're mining coal they've lost it. Exactly what happened to us. Eventually they're gonna make paper. It may take years - and the same thing with coal. They've got people that'll mine it. You've gotta stop these people from going across the line. Once they cross the line, you've lost it.

International Paper began hiring scabs even before the strike had begun. The scale of the operation was enormous. The mill was encircled with a security fence in the fashion of a military installation. The first scabs were B, E, & K "professional" strikebreakers who had made the 20 or 30-hour drive from states in the South. They were housed in 40 trailer homes that were set up on mill property.

Within 10 weeks IP had received 2500 applications and had hired more than a thousand scabs. Most of them were from within a 40 mile area and had left a variety of lower paying jobs including ones with logging contractors, shoe shops and wood turning mills that payed wages between $ 4.50 and $ 6.00 an hour. The average starting pay at IP was roughly double this at $ 10 an hour.

IP insisted that the scabs had been hired on a permanent basis. The union demanded that the strikers be guaranteed their jobs, and insisted that the scabs were only temporary workers. All "negotiations" subsequent to the initial contract offer began and ended on this same subject. In April 1989, ten months into the strike, the full significance of the company's position was made clear in a "new" contract which offered to relocate the strikers to other mills throughout the country.

Contract rejection, April 1988

This suggestion of forced relocation was the underlying meaning of the Jay enclosure: The non-negotiable contract, the fence surrounding the mill, and the army of scabs all signalled the end of collective bargaining. It represented the final expression of capital's demand for 'flexibility' in the 1980s. In Jay, the workers responded with a spontaneous expression of defiance that at once seemed to make the ballot box obsolete.

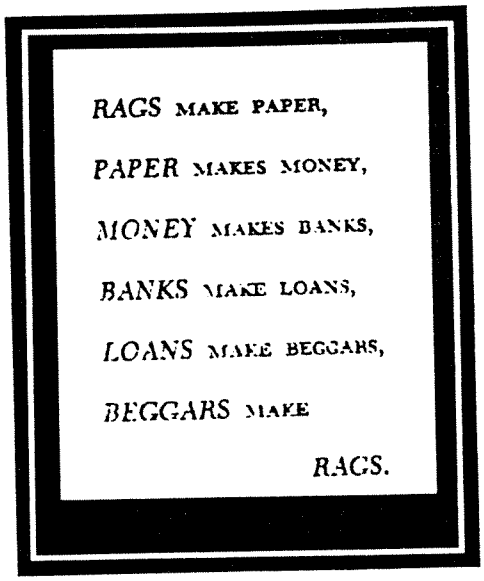
The Long Haul

'After I take this Finnish gent,' Mickey said, 'what do I do with him? I don't want to brag about how dumb I am, but this job is plain astronomy to me. I understand everything about it except what you have done and why and what you're trying to do and how.'

Red Harvest

Given the history of the decade, beginning with the massive attack against the air traffic controllers, the Jay strike was more than a fight against concessions. It was the struggle against the scabs which expanded the context of the strike outside the realms of the paper industry. And it was this struggle that linked the Jay strikers with the vast number of workers around the world who have seen themselves become expendable in the face of nationally organized strikebreaking.

In Jay there were daily confrontations between strikers and scabs. This, and the state-wide support that was received from other unions, built up considerable pressure in the state legislature. By late summer 1987, a bill was passed by the legislature that would have prevented employers from hiring scabs for the first ten weeks of a strike. But even this moderate measure was soon defeated when the state governor, John McKernan, whose brother is a well-known lobbyist for the paper industry, vetoed the bill and the legislature wasn't able to override his veto. In total, the governor vetoed similar legislation three times during the strike, earning himself the title McVeto among strikers.



At the end of the first month of the strike, IP announced that the mill was running at 60 percent of normal capacity. While this was far from the truth and intended to undermine the strike by presenting the semblance of normal production, it raised a question that was posed throughout the strike: can the 1250 paperworkers in Jay really be replaced?

In Jay, much was made of the fact that the scabs were not producing paper, or if they were, that it was of such poor quality that it could never be sold. The assumption underpinning this argument was that there was some knowledge or skill involved in papermaking that couldn't be replaced even if the paperworkers themselves could be.

That production at the mill was affected by the strike is clear. Even after fifteen months, huge piles of purchased pulp were in the mill yard, demonstrating that the scabs were still unable to consistently make a high quality pulp. But the reality of the new automation, the proliferation of professional strikebreaking firms, and the prevailing low wage rates had given IP the framework for achieving its objectives. By the spring of 1989, six months after the strike was terminated, the mill announced that the scabs, with the 100 or so strikers that had been rehired, had broken previous production records.

One of the foreseeable consequences of the union's legalistic strategy was that the strike would not shut the mill down. But a related consequence was that the strike would be a long and protracted struggle, and that events outside of Jay would become increasingly important. With scabs "running" the plant, it wasn't at all clear if the union had any strategy at all.

In August, 1987, Local 14 organized one of the largest labor rallies in the history of Maine. Close to 10,000 people from around New England travelled to Jay and marched to the mill. But while the march demonstrated enormous support for the strike, the union made no attempt to harness its potential power in shutting down the mill. As quickly as the demonstration had assembled, it disappeared.

In the fall, many people in Jay realized that the strike needed a new push. Having blocked the mass actions of the summer, the union appeared to have no strategy and turned to Corporate Campaign (CC) for help. After Ray Rogers, the founder and head of CC, came to Jay to address the membership, Local 14 urged the UPIU to hire him. However Corporate Campaign was not hired until December, six months into the strike.

The basic strategy of a corporate campaign is straightforward. It should be general knowledge for union organizers: study your enemy and mobilize your strengths against your opponent's weaknesses. The fact that there is a demand for the services of the Corporate Campaign's services demonstrates that unions, as in Jay, have little or no such organizing experience.

Roger's involvement in the strike brought a strategy to the long haul that was otherwise not present. As a result, four distinct programs were begun which together defined the union's strategy.

First, workers mobilized to put pressure on several corporations and banks with financial ties to IP including Coca-Cola, Avon, and the Bank of Boston. At one of the highpoints, a large demonstration was organized against the Bank Of Boston which brought hundreds of people from Jay to the bank's corporate headquarters in Boston. The rally was a powerful show of strength and made tangible the link between the scabs in Jay and the largest financial institution in the financial center of New England.

Second, a series of travelling caravans were organized in which people from Jay were able to speak to thousands of workers and supporters throughout New England. On the caravans the strikers circulated their struggle in the most direct way possible, while at the same time raising funds to continue the strike. In Maine, where caravans of between 10 and 20 cars travelled to every single papermill town, strikers were able to counter the lies that IP was circulating in an enormous television and newspaper campaign.

Third, workers were able to link the four separate locations against IP's efforts to keep the struggles distinct. A whole series of horizontal connections was established between the 3,500 locked-out/striking workers and workers at IP mills throughout the country. This was done outside the formal lines of communication of the UPIU.

JAY RAGE

"But I wish to god, now, that we'd been a little harder. I don't mean that we should have killed somebody. But I wish we'd shown them...That we're not gonna just stand back and let you roll over us like with a steam shovel..."

In the beginning of the strike I thought, I'm not going on that picket line. I mean the first night I went, someone gave me a picket sign and said, "Hold this." And I said I can't hold that, I can't do that. Somebody said, "Scream at that scab." I said I can't, and the first time I screamed, I cried. I thought, I'm gonna go to hell for calling this guy a dirty rotten name.

And now, I don't regret one damn thing I said and I wished I'd spent every minute up there because where I work, like any other service place you have to deal with those sons of bees. They don't give a damn about what they did to anybody in this town. They're arrogant about it! They enjoy the fact that they're standing next to you in a line and when you guys are getting strike pay, they loved it. They enjoyed the fact that here they were with their three and four hundred dollar checks and you guys were hurtin'.

The other bunch that I can't stomach is the lower management people. They're no better than we are! They think that they've got a prestigious position, but when you guys are out where the hell are they gonna be. And what did they do? Train a scab to take your job! I resent them as much as I resent the scabs. They come in and cash their double-salary paychecks and you guys were living on fifty-five dollars. I hate them. I hate what they did to everybody in this town.

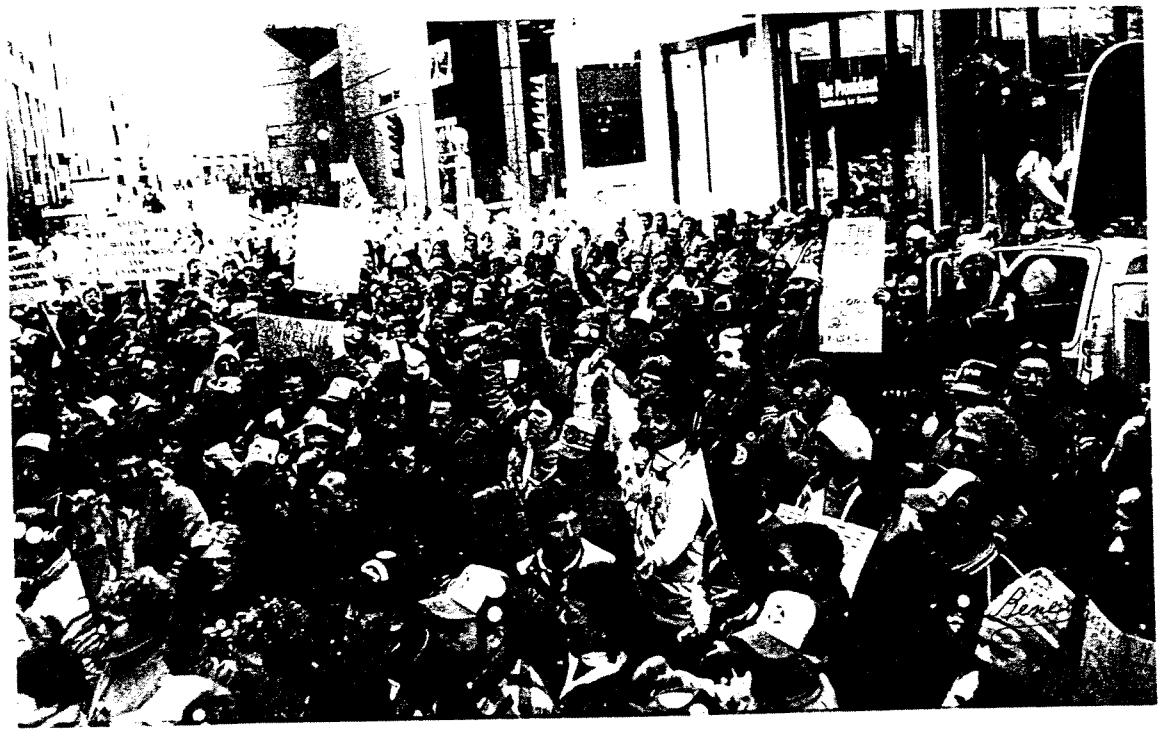
Then I used to think how, you know, I can't think bad of somebody. Well I understand why they're scabbing. Boy I learned the hard way. I don't understand why anybody would scab! There's no reason for it. But I guess at this point, what I feel like — course at work I can't say a damn thing. I can give 'em a dirty look. I can ignore 'em. I can not talk to 'em. I can give 'em their money and — I mean I do everything: I don't touch their hands, I don't do nothing. I slap the money on the counter and I'm as rotten as I can be and still do my job and not get in trouble.

But I wish to god, now, that we'd been harder. I wish — I don't mean that I think we should have killed somebody. But I wish we'd shown them, like that guy said: You don't have to blow up the damn mill but you can sure as hell blow up the little building in the back and show 'em we mean business. That we're not gonna just stand back and let you roll over us like with a steam shovel and just take what you want. I mean they're coming in here and one guy — well he's (with a strong southern accent) "Gonna buy a house." Buy your godamn house! I hope somebody burns it — isn't that a rotten thing to say. I hope sombody breaks every window in it and I hope when they're throwing the rocks it hits somebody on the head. And I hate feeling that way!

And I resent IP for turning us to that. I resent IP for making me think that my neighbour is an asshole. But as far as I'm concerned he screwed every one of you over. He deliberately stayed in there. And if they had come out with the rank and file and said, "Hey, if our guys ain't working, we're not working." But no, they chose to stay in there because they had to have their paycheck. Well what was everybody else doing. Depending on the food bank and handouts from everybody to fight for a cause. They should have come out.

I guess what it boils down to: I hope my kids have learned that they'll never scab no matter what. No matter what the company offers you or I don't care if you have to starve, you go find some way else instead of screwing your neighbour in the back. Screwing somebody that you've worked next to for twenty or thirty years for the almighty dollar.

Note: This rap is from a discussion in Jay in July, 1989, ten months after the strike was terminated. The woman speaking works as a teller at the local credit union.



Jay strikers and supporters demonstrate outside the Bank of Boston headquarters

Finally, the cumulative effect of these efforts forced IP to acknowledge that the four locations were acting jointly, and in April 1989, to open joint negotiations. IP made the termination of the Corporate Campaign a condition for these negotiations. When the UPIU agreed, it found IP still insistent that the scabs were permanent. The contracts were overwhelmingly rejected at all four sites.

The failure of the April negotiations marked the failure of the strategy of the long haul. Despite the importance of some of these experiences, this strategy directly contradicted the mass mobilizations initiated by the workers at the start of the strike. Boycotts, trips to Boston, and the building of the "pool" could not substitute for stopping production at the mill.

There's Life (and Death) After IP

I did this for 13 years, and now that I've gotten away from it, and I've been away from it a year and a half - I feel it. I've never really felt this good in a long time.

In Jay, in the midst of all these activities, the strike was having a profound effect on everyone. The experiences of a long and protracted struggle radically transformed the community. In place of three separate towns, working separate shifts, the people in Jay were creating a lively community. A number of organizations were created during the strike including a food bank, a clothes bank, and a job bank. In addition, weekly meetings organized by the union became regular social events.

People in Jay, freed from the long hours and unnerving shifts of the Southern Swing, discovered that they had a great deal more time. They had time to spend with their families, to build new relationships, and to talk about new subjects. One father was able to teach his children how to read.

People also had time to reflect on their lives prior to the strike when their dedication to IP had been so all-consuming. In the words of one striker, "it made us realize that there's life after IP." It also led many workers to realize that their dedication had often been nothing more than overtime:

"Another thing I hear a lot of people say is, 'I'm gonna work no more overtime. I'm gonna work just what I have to'... But they won't get called in the middle of the night and say, 'Yeah, I'll be right there.' No more. I don't think you'll see that anymore."

"I don't have any dedication towards the company. No matter where I work. My attitude sucks. It does, honest to god. I'm supposed to be at work in three quarters of an hour and once again I'm not going. They asked me to work mandatory overtime the first week I was there. I told them, 'I worked all the overtime IP asked me to. Anytime they asked me to work, I worked.' And I said, 'Look where it got me.' I'm all done working overtime."

In February 1988, mid-way through the strike, the town of Jay was evacuated following an enormous, and potentially fatal, chlorine dioxide leak at the mill. Chlorine dioxide is used to make pulp from ground wood and is so dangerous that it cannot legally be mixed on site. It is twice as deadly as the chemical that killed 2500 people at the Union Carbide plant in Bhopal, India. In fact, the leak in Jay could have been worse than Bhopal if the weather had been warmer and allowed the chemical to turn into gas or mix with the river water to form hydrochloric acid.

The experience of the leak, and of the evacuation, brought a turning point in the strike. Women, most of whom had never worked at the mill, raised a set of demands which transformed the strike into a broader struggle. They demanded control over the mill, the environment, and the town itself.

Within two days they organized a group of women and children to march on the mill. It was a small march in comparison

with the enormous rally of the previous summer, but its impact was more powerful. In its fundamental demands, it challenged the subordination of community life to IP's production process. Traditional divisions between the mill and the home, and between factory issues and community concerns, were quickly being broken down.

At the mill gates the demand was raised to shut the mill down:

"We're not done! We want the mill down! We want our children to go to bed at night and know that they'll wake up in the morning. I don't want my kids evacuated if the mill thinks that they should tell us! We're not stupid! We know what's going on and we're sick of their whitewash and propaganda and cover-up! They don't have a forcefield around this mill. There's no way that chlorine and gas stays in this mill. We want it down!"

Their demand for the right to live in a safe environment won wide support. It led to a new level of political activity by the community which included running pro-strike candidates for all local political offices, and passing an environmental ordinance at a special town meeting. This ordinance, which IP tried unsuccessfully to repeal in 1989, gave the town of Jay authority to set and enforce environmental standards. Such authority is normally reserved for state and federal agencies like the EPA, but these had long shown themselves to be "in the pocket" of the paper industry.

The environmental ordinance posed a significant challenge to IP by attempting to control IP's production inside the mill, on the basis that it affected the health of those outside the mill. IP suggested that the ordinance would make Jay "the most anti-business town in Maine." In the Maine Business Journal, the company actually claimed that the ordinance could force it to close the mill.

Workers in the paper industry, from logging camps to millwork, have always known their work is extremely hazardous. As one striker said, *"If they made you jump into that toxic shit in there, and believe me they have it, a lot of it, and you refused to do it, you could go right out the door. You couldn't even grieve that."* And papermill communities have also known the rivers were polluted, the air smelt nauseating, and deadly waste was being buried underground. This was understood to be a part of life, the price of having "a steak on the table". That the death rate from cancer in Maine is ten percent above the national average, and is concentrated in the papermill communities, was understood without the need for statistics. One woman, who has been on medication for more than a year as a result of the chlorine leak, explained that Jay, "is a haven for widows."

The fact that a chemical leak gave rise to new demands which transformed the strike is significant in several respects. It demonstrated concretely that "green" issues can broaden the struggle of industrial workers. But it also revealed that these demands were not initiated by the union, nor directly by the union members.

Additionally, these environmental demands fundamentally challenged prevalent green politics. In place of the question of how to clean the rivers, for example, they demanded control over the mill.

The environmental movement can learn an essential lesson from Jay if it accepts some basic realities. First, that virtually all of the land in the country is owned by some sector of capital. Second, that as long as capital owns the land it will also control how the land is used. Third, that the capitalist priorities which generate pollution cannot be effectively challenged without the political power and organized support of the local working class.

LAND USE IN THE UNITED STATES

30%	Forestland (wood and paper)
25%	Grasslands (meat and dairy)
22%	Croplands (wheat and corn)
12%	Marshes, Deserts, and Swamps
10%	"Recreation and Wildlife"
1.4%	Population Areas (An area with more than 5,000 inhabitants)

Source: Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1989

How Not To End A Strike

The thin lips curved in another smile. He didn't seem to think much of the fat chief's deadliness. 'Any time he rubs me out I deserve rubbing. What's he got against you?'

Red Harvest

By the summer of 1988, a full year into the strike, it was widely recognized that the strategy of the long haul would not be enough to win the struggle. A new strategy was needed that would expand the strike to mills throughout the IP system. The strikers needed reinforcements, and Local 14, which was the organizational center of the Corporate Campaign activities, played a key role in the new strategy.

Throughout the summer, the "horizontal" connections between paper workers in the striking locations and others still on the job were expanded. These were direct, face-to-face contacts between workers, and they were made outside the formal channels of communication of the UPIU.

Workers in many of the non-striking mills were urged to slow down production and work-to-rule, in order to hurt IP's production outside the striking mills. Some locations acted on this demand. However, judging from IP's record high revenues and production figures in 1987 and 1988, others decided not to support the strike. According to IP's 1989 Annual Report, the following statistics tell this tale.

IP'S CLAIMED SALES AND PRODUCTION

	1986	1987	1988
Net Sales (billions of $)	5.5	7.7	9.5
Production White Paper (millions of tons)	1.65	2.1	2.3
Production Coated Paper (millions of tons)	.40	.45	.53

At the UPIU national convention, in August 1988, hopes were raised when the strategy of extending the strike received wide support. The UPIU agreed that it would find money to extend the strikers' benefits and that efforts would be made to expand the "pool." Indeed, there was agreement that if (1) a location's contract with IP was not expired, the location would ask for it to be re-opened, and (2) if a location's contract was expired, no concessionary contract would be signed.

But the hope following the convention soon turned to anxiety. Despite the convention's agreements, contracts were negotiated at a number of IP locations because local leadership at those mills didn't consider them to be "concessionary." The president of the UPIU in turn signed them. A significant breakdown in the convention's agreements had arisen over something as straightforward as the definition of what was "concessionary."

By September, there was a lot of confusion in Jay. People believed that the strategy of expanding the strike held the only hope for victory, but this also meant that there was little that they themselves could do. Increasingly, the outcome of this long struggle was becoming dependent on decisions made by others in distant places.

A striking crane operator expressed what many people in Jay were talking about: *"That's what we are right now, we're hanging on. So when they call us front line soldiers, that's what we are. We gotta have the replacements to win the war. We gotta have the replacements. They've gotta come and help us."*

There was a brief moment of real excitement at the start of the month when 20 cars of roving pickets were "despatched" on an all night drive to the IP mill in Ticonderoga, New York. There, the Jay strikers set up pickets at morning shift change. The picket line was honored but many workers at the mill as well as the local union leadership were openly resentful of not having been given notice. Similar actions were not repeated, and in Jay, the rush of excitement turned again to anxiety.

At this time, everyone's expectations focused on an October 8 and 9 meeting of the IP union pension council to be held in Nashville, Tennessee, the headquarters of the UPIU and a safe distance from all four locations. At that meeting, according to Local 14's president, Bill Meserve, Jay would "once and for all" find out if the strike had the support it needed from other locations. On Monday October 10, the people in Jay learned that their strike had been ended, though they had not voted to end it. Most people first heard the news as "news" on the radio.

People were in a state of shock. Throughout the strike, they had repeatedly been told by the leadership of the local union that they themselves would decide when the strike was over. When they demanded to know what had happened, local union officials told them that there wasn't enough support for the strike. If the strike had not been terminated in this way, they argued, hundreds of strikers, learning that the meeting had gone badly, would have rushed across the picket lines to claim jobs at the mill.

The union's underlying accusation was that hundreds of strikers were planning to scab, and that it had "saved" these potential scabs from themselves. In an even more ludicrous argument, union leaders said that by terminating the strike they had "preserved" the solidarity in the town.

The anger in Jay never coalesced into a collective power. No group even raised the question of whether the local union leadership had the legal right to terminate the strike in this way. Instead, the bitterness was directed at the UPIU, and doubts began to be voiced about the whole project of the strike. No one in Jay had been given a complete explanation of what had happened at the October meeting. Even after a year had passed, most people in Jay still did not know exactly how or why the strike was ended under such circumstances.

Aftershocks

The first aftershock came quickly, within months. It confirmed that the IP strategy and the struggle against it would have ramifications throughout the industry.

At the Boise Cascade mill, 30 miles up river, the union accepted an unprecedented six-year concessionary contract. Signed a full six months before the existing contract was to expire, the Boise contract was one measure of what had been at stake in the struggle against IP.

The Boise contract was the first six-year contract to be negotiated in any manufacturing industry in Maine. It included the elimination of the Christmas shutdown holiday by 1990; the complete elimination of premium pay for work on Sundays and holidays by 1994; a wage package that will effectively reduce real wages by the rate of inflation each year (or by nearly 30 % by 1995 if the present rate does not rise); a requirement that workers begin paying a portion of their health care insurance; and a series of changes in work rules and seniority that are designed to give the company complete control over the production process.

Further aftershocks were also felt in the paper industry, but these were not always concessionary contracts. In September 1989, almost a year after the strike's termination, workers on a wildcat strike at a Boise Cascade mill over a thousand miles away, in International Falls, Minnesota, stormed a housing compound where B, E, & K scabs were living. Trailers were set on fire and vehicles were overturned before state police, using tear gas, managed to disperse the crowd of more than 400. The National Guard was put on alert. The mill is in the process of being modernized by Boise Cascade. One of the workers arrested was killed while in police custody.

Several weeks later, in West Virginia, more than 2,000 striking coal miners and supporters marched on Pittston Coal Company's main coal processing plant and shut it down. Nearly 200 occupied the plant's control room. They had brought all necessary provisions to remain inside for a week. These coal miners had been on strike against the Pittston Company since the beginning of June, 1989. Pittston had also hired scabs in its effort to break the strike. The doors to the control room were locked with cables and chains, and the plant itself was surrounded by the remaining group of miners.

The occupation of Moss Plant No. 3 near Castlewood, West Virginia was the first mass ocupation since the 1930s, but barely a word was carried by the national press. The miners left the plant after four days, signalling that their action was primarily intended as a symbolic show of strength. But it also demonstrated that the sit-down tactic had resurfaced in this period of mass strikebreaking.

In Jay, the year following the ending of the strike was quiet compared to these various aftershocks. It was quiet, but it was also a period of immense changes. It meant accepting that the strike was over, the strikers had lost their jobs, the mill was being operated by scabs. The principal social organizations built during the course of the strike were also closed during the course of the year. The weekly meetings were the first to end; the food bank closed in July; the clothes bank in August. Finally, in September, the big sign in the center of Jay that read "Scabs Go Home" was taken down.

The year involved finding work elsewhere, the last of the unemployment and displaced worker benefits having been terminated. The paperworkers of Jay were turned into migrant workers, fanning-out every morning to work all around the surrounding area. Their new jobs required travelling anywhere from 1 to 3 hours each day.

Nearly 150 strikers travelled in vans to work two different shifts at Maine's largest manufacturer, the Bath Iron Works. There, in a union shop, they worked on a Navy shipbuilding contract. Strikers also found work at papermills all over the state of Maine. In fact, there were Jay paperworkers working at mills owned by every major paper company in the state. But wherever they travelled, they circulated their experiences.

I was earning twice what the hell I'm earning here. If the new contract takes away one red cent I'll walk! I'm not going to drain my retirement because you're not paying me. I'm looking for a job. The hell with the company I work for. I'll do my job, but the first chance I get I'm gone.

Some of the strikers refused to travel and looked for work closer to home. They found work at the nearby Bass shoe plant, the Carlton Woolen mill, and as builders and bus drivers. Generally, the work paid much less than wages at IP, but by this time people had lived for over two years without that money. One striker enrolled in a university, another opened up a diner in the center of town. It's called the "End of The Line."

1. Unless otherwise noted, all quotations are from interviews with people in Jay during and after the strike.

Author's note: This article has grown out of my involvment in the IP strike as a videomaker, producing a documentary for use as an organizing tool by the striking locals. A twenty minute video, "Paper Strike", was taken to the October 1988 Nashville Conference but was prevented from being shown. The final version of the video, entitled "Many Faces of Paper", has been circulated to papermill communities across the country.

I thank Bryn Clark and Sande Smith, fellow video activists and members of Black Cat Collective, with whom I shared the experience of working in Jay. Thanks also to Rene Brochu for his photographs of the strike, andto the many friends in Jay who have given me an education during and since the strike.

Most of the information for this article has been assembled from interviews, but the following sources have been used:

Local and Maine Periodicals: Livermore Falls Advertiser; Kennebec Journal; The Lewiston Daily Sun; Morning Sentinel; Maine Times; Portland Press Herald; Maine Business Journal.

Trade and Financial: Paper Trade Journal, 1985-89; Pulp and Paper, 1985-89; Moody's Financial Journal, 1988-89; "World Pulp and Paper Industry," Financial Times Survey, December 13, 1989.

Government Publications: Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1989; Maine Occupational Wages in Manufacturing Industries, 1980-89; Census of Maine Manufacturers, 1949-89; Labor Relations in Maine, 1984-89; Occupational Injuries and Illnesses in Maine, 1980-89.

For the only complete account of the October 1988 Nashville Conference, see C. Caffentzis, "How Not To End A Strike", available from the author. For a general history of the Maine paper industry, see William C. Osborn, The Paper Plantation, 1973.

Land, Wealth, and Self-Determination in the Lower East Side

The following dialogue took place in the spring of 1989 with two activists involved in the squatter's movement in the Lower East Side of Manhattan, a local Latino man and a mother (**JB** and **RW** respectively in the interview). The period from 1985 has seen a series of building seizures for living and organization, confrontations with police, and a mass occupation of a local park, Tompkins Square Park, by homeless people in the Lower East Side. All of these actions have been organized outside of any official or institutional leadership. We publish this document as our contribution to making more widely known the struggle over land, wealth and self-determination in that neighborhood.

The discussion describes some of the forms of struggle used by squatters and other Lower East Side activists, and reveals the variety of experiences of people in that area. From Liberation Theology to anarchism, from homelessness to punk rock, from the European squatters movement to anti-racist and anti-police struggles, from AIDS organizing to Puerto Rican self-rule, and from carpentry to plumbing. In addition there is the rich history of struggle in the Lower East Sidewhich activists have been able to draw upon (see, for example, Midnight words on the Insurrection of 1741 in "A Letter From a 'Loose and Disorderly' New Yorker," *Posthumous Notes*, Midnight Notes #6).

The existence of organized struggle in the Lower Eat Side, involving such varied people's and lifestyles, is in itself a rebuke to the New Enclosures, since it represents the coming together of proletarians who have at last found in their journeys both the space for new relationships and a place to defend and enlarge them.

The squatters movement has also grown out of the New Enclosures as experienced in New York City in the form of austerity — severe cuts in social services, raising of transit fares, and dramatic rent increases making whole sections of the City uninhabitable for working people. Austerity was initiated in the mid and late 1970s to defeat a wave of social struggles which, in the 1960s and early 1970s, redistributed considerable wealth from the private sector and the government to public sector workers, students, welfare mothers and tenants. Resistance to austerity, including the insurrection and mass looting in the summer of 1977 during a blackout, hastened implementation of plans for the destruction and depopulation of entire neighborhoods considered centers for resistance.

As we reported in our *Space Notes* issue, "Spatial Deconcentration" is the state's effort to economically isolate and then eliminate the ghetto as a space for organized mass political power. Spatial Deconcentration has been in full swing in New York City for years. The Lower East Side, which extends from Delancey St. north to 14th Street and from about 2nd Avenue to the East River (see map), continues to undergo this attack. Fifteen per cent of it's people and 7.5% of its housing stock were lost in the 1970s. In one 12 block area, between Avenues B and D, which is now a site of concentrated struggle, 70% of the residents were evicted and 3,400 housing units destroyed.

The predominantly Latino neighborhood in the Lower East Side has formed a loose alliance, though not yet fully developed, of Latino residents (who remain underrepresented), and white, black and Latino political activists, homeless, squatters, artists, punks, and anarchists. Although squatters were slowly building a presence there through the mid-1980s, the political potential of the social relations on the Lower East Side were largely unrealized or unnoticed until mass resistance to a police enforced curfew erutpted in Tompkins Square Park in July of 1988, when hundreds of local people battled the cops for several nights. As a result of this conflict, the park was adopted as a collective living space by hundreds of people.

The taking of the park as public land to live and the use of collective action to hold it show the extent to which the example of squatters has been absorbed by the local homeless. The demand for wealth, in particular housing and land, is closely linked to the demand for self-determination. The park homeless, for example, insist on deciding where they will live in the absence of adequate housing and reject the authoritarian solution of shelters. The demand for self-determination is obvious in the case of squatting, where bureaucratic co-optation and "poverty pimps" are rejected, and where decisions are made at house meetings based on direct democracy. Mass democracy as the method of decision-making characterizes the informal structure of the movement on the Lower East Side in all its facets, a fact made more significant by the increasingly institutional strategies of much of the US left in recent years. The squatters and park activists have this trait in common with the AIDS activist organization ACT UP, and recent months have seen a co-sponsored demonstration in support of squatting and housing for HIV-postive homeless.

The recent, more effective police tactics, such as the eviction of people from Tompkins Square Park in December 1989 during bitterly cold weather, have prompted new discussion within the movement over the effectiveness of violence, mass civil disobedience, and sabotage of police technology. The discussion has also focussed on how best to strategically expand the struggle to involve more local tenants. One idea, the organization of a city wide rent strike in 1990, has the potential to generalize the squatters movement. Recent militant demonstrations led by African-Americans against the murder of Yusef Hawkins by a group of white youths suggests another opening for a broader proletarian alliance along the lines of self-determination.

REAL ESTATE
HPD
HOME
POLICE LINE

Lower East Side

STRONG WORDS

MN: Before we talk about the current movement, talk a bit about how you ended up on the Lower East Side, some of the religious movement background.

JB: One day I was invited as a Seminarian to go to the Firing Line show to debate the question of the existence of God — how old was I? I don't know, about mid to late 20s — During the course of the show I commented in relation to the discussion that was going on. I said very little really. But at some point, one of the right wing types said something about "Don't you believe in God?" And I said, well it's not really about object worship is it. And that was really all I said. And I got this incredible amount of hate mail from fundamentalists that was sent to the seminary.

In 1975 we formed Christians for Socialism, which was basically a group of people who translated and disseminated some of the documents from Medellin around the liberation theology conference that was happening there around 73. Or 1971? Yeah, it was the early days of Liberation Theology in Latin America.

It was a meeting point between radical leftists, people who felt some kind of interest in this whole question of religion, and particularly the captivity of that whole issue in the hands of the right. My opinion has always been that people who are leftists closet that question. They knee jerk what the state has taught them to knee jerk — from the male white god right through a kind of passive acceptance of the whole use of "right wing Christianity" by the state, and vice versa. The critique is individualistic, subjective, like "let's wish it all away."

You know, that is not the kind of resistance required. Like I heard this guy on the radio last week talking about going to churches — targeting churches and going there and just standing up in the middle of services and saying, "Hold It! There's problems here with this church." Things like this you hear about so rarely.

Christians for Socialism had a lot of aspects to it. Labor people, members of some of the left-wing parties who were then thrown out of their own parties. In one party in particular people were thrown out. One guy I knew, who was a writer for many years for the *Daily World* was bounced out as a result of affiliating and becoming deeply involved in this radical religious, pro-socialist movement.

We sponsored forums. I remember we did some on the revolutionary priest Camillo Torres. We published propaganda, like the avenues of alliance between radical (roots) Christianity and communism. We also did translations. There was a group out of Columbia University, Church Research Information Project (CRIPS), which did a lot of early Moon research. The whole KCIA connection to Moon was published by CRIPS. That group along with the New York Circus, still does some of the best reporting on the grassroots struggles in Latin America.

The liberation theology movement, if you can call it such, is really broad. For instance I had two teachers. One up at the Union Seminary at the time, James Cone, was one of the early leaders and exponents of black liberation theology. He wrote a book called *Black Power, Black Theology* — late 60s I think it was. And later on, *Black Liberation Theology* and *The God of the Oppressed*. I was very involved in that as a tendency and movement in this country, particularly up in the Harlem area with some other people there, working against evictions and on housing stuff.

And I also took a course with Letty Russell, who was a feminist theologian, and a course with Mary Daly, who is really beyond post-feminist theology. So it was really broad, there were a lot of things going on.

The Latin American variety of liberation theology which I was most connected with tended to be the more anarchistic, Marxist, leftist. Because there was this thing, you know, the Marxist-Christian dialogue, or alliance as Dorothy Solle used to say. The point is to move from dialogue to **alliance**. There were strategic alliances and Nicaragua is a perfect example. Some criticism can be made of the educational structure there and the question of the Jesuits and all that. But there were alliances made between radical base communities who were reading the Bible and going out becoming part of the Popular Army. You know people like Romero. The inspiration and power derived for the revolutionary struggle from these base communities cannot be underestimated.

I've moved beyond that though, because I felt personally at that time the limitations of a group of people who would call themselves neither Church nor Party. That was our slogan in Christians for Socialism and it got to be really boring after a while.

There was one early book by José Bonino called *Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Situation* which really got to me. It's one of the books I really liked a lot. It was a short little primer. José Miranda's book Communism and the Bible, which is a hundred page gem. Incredible. Things like this really are good. Everybody knows Gutiérez and some of the bigger known names who were doing

really ponderous theology because they were competing with Western theologians and they would say it right out, which I guess is okay, but I'm more interested in the popular stuff, like the radical comic strips.

The whole question of religion to me is a very interesting and central question to struggle in terms of ideological struggle and in terms of the will to resist and take chances.

MN: Where would someone go to find books and documentation on this effort?

JB: Well the best source for books like that is Orbis Press which is in Maryknoll, N.Y.

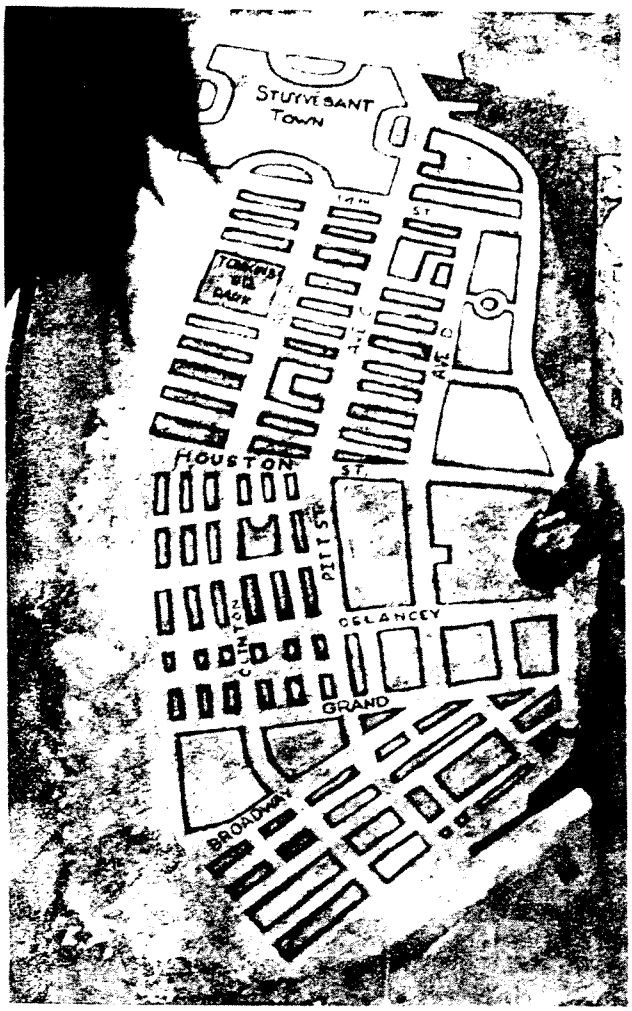
First of all the Book of Acts represents, in part, the structural means by which the sect — the Christian sect — will organize itself. In there it says clearly that everything will be held in common and things like this. Jesus was also very clear saying if you want to follow me you have to sell everything. It was very uncompromising through Jesus to James (Jesus' brother), to Francis and the movement of poverty.

There was a social movement at the time in opposition to Roman Imperial control. One of the tendencies went under the name of the Zealot party. A guy by the name of Brandon did a number of books and things on this. Some of the right wing people at the Heritage Foundation recently have written critiques of these books that are totally — what's the word? — they are not really well done, they are just these kind of broadside attacks. But it's interesting that they are attacking it. It's an example of disinformation and revisionist history.

In any case, this group, as far as can be known, was about direct action and was involved in small scale guerilla activity including this one time when they took over the Temple where a lot of the business was being transacted. And this interestingly enough is the first reported act of the mature Jesus figure coming in — with the whip in hand — in a somewhat violent fashion and inaugurating a campaign. El Greco did a great painting of it. Well it was, you know, a short period of time before they killed him and they killed a whole bunch of other people including a number of the priestesses who were involved, Mary Magdalene being one of them. You know, they came after people and it was smashed.

But the tradition which lived on through James, recorded in the Book of Acts, in the Gnostic Gospels, and other places, points to the desire to maintain these lines of common ownership and each according to their need, peace, things like that.

Miranda, in particular, builds on that and also makes really credible arguments around the whole archaeological question in itself — certain things are just lies, this was never said, the original language was this or that — and he's a scholar so he is taken very seriously. He wrote a couple of really longer more detailed studies. One called *Marx and The Bible*, a critique of oppression, and some other books. Nothing yet, the way I look at it, has seriously challenged from a progressive side the patriarchal, monotheistic conception. Because even liberation theologians, pretty much across the board, even some of the women liberation theologians, still see the divine force as being a liberating force and that force understood in what I would consider a fairly traditional way but given another name. I believe that this kind of ideological confusion in the liberation theology movement again, mimics the ideological confusion in the left.



MN: So how did these interests lead you into the squatters movement, first in the Bronx, right?

JB: This would be 78 or 79 — in the South Bronx. We took a few buildings over.

MN: As a part of a church service, right?

JB: Yeah, I was working in a church. When I worked in churches what I tried to negotiate was to be let to do work out in the streets. And you know, there would be arrangements: all right you have to come in and preach every other week or every week, or you have to come in and have a youth group, or you have to do this or have to do that. Generally, that's what I tried to negotiate for. That's pretty much what I was doing there.

So there was a store front, and direct service type programs, and food, shelter and clothing types of things. There was a clinic and a store front for narcotics counselling. Things that were relevant on 139th Street at that time, which was a period when Jimmy Carter came there, Ronald Reagan came there to see the South Bronx. The Pope came right up my street. Paul Newman came there — *Fort Apache* — we ran him out. There were Japanese bus tours, I remember, that used to go right by my street.

We worked there, and the way I saw what I was doing there was again to be as close as I could be with the people on the street, the poor, in solidarity and in struggle, and trying to

implement what were felt to be collective desires as part of a collective effort.

Now what happened was elements of the state moved on me. Very similar, if I might say so, to the whole New Testament riff. I mean it was very dramatic the way they did it. You know, they tried to crucify me. It's true!

I was working with a group, looking at the land policies of that area, and began to notice that the Pentagon was buying up large segments of the South Bronx. Large, open tracks are owned by the Pentagon up there — and HUD [U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development - Ed.].

We had known that HUD had had for quite a while a working relationship with the Pentagon around the question of urban land, because the Pentagon had its' own control motives and HUD had its' own internal needs, as well mirroring the needs of the racist state, the spatial deconcentration plan. So some land had been bought there and there were people being displaced, and we found out that some of the leadership in the Church was involved in these dealings, including the local minister having met with Sam Pierce, the New York head of HUD [Sam Pierce later became Secretary of HUD under Reagan and is perhaps soon to be indicted on corruption charges — Ed.], and some people from Trinity. Trinity, as you know, owns a lot of Manhattan. We learned of efforts to depopulate a whole area. We let people know. We got death threats. So in any case, some pig priests began to spread rumors about me and different things went on.

THE LATEST.
FOR SOME THE ONLY PLACE TO SLEEP.
SEEMS LIKE YOU CANT WALK DOWN THE STREET WITHOUT
SOMEONE SAYING HELLO.
A HOMELESS MAN COMPLAINS ABOUT CON-ED DUMPING TOXIC CHEMICALS WHERE HE SLEEPS.
HE FINDS OUT THAT THE GUY HE'S TALKING TO HAS A.I.D.S
THEY DECIDE TO WORK TOGETHER AGAINST CONED

RW: Let me stop you here, what you say here can be quoted, and I don't know if you want all this...

JB: Hey, the truth will set you free. The interesting point about this, to me a theological point, was that when the inevitable happened and I received my walking papers for anti-authoritarian behavior and being prone to violence, you know, having outbursts of anger and things like this that were unbecoming a clergyman, people in the community began to circulate a petition saying that I should not be removed and in fact I should be installed as the local minister.

People were ready to occupy the church. There was a tremendous base of opposition to the behavior of this individual, which could be characterized in this way: as racist, very ruling class, colonizer. This guy was really bad. You could do a whole thing on this, the way in which this ideology is used to oppress. I mean this guy was really good at it. He had it down. Patron is the word in Spanish, you know, real fuckin' pig owner.

In any case what this raised for me — and I spoke about this with Desmond Tutu when he was in New York. He taught a course that I took. You know, he's involved in the South African struggle, he's an Anglican Bishop. And I asked him, when was it relevant to think in terms of insurrection within the Church, you know, like people taking over the churches for positive struggle. And he discounted it as some kind of methodology of violence that I was putting out there.

I feel the question of religion is tied up very closely with the question of violence. That's what I've been working on intellectually so to speak — because we don't get a lot of time to read or write in the buildings, working on shit and defending the squats. We just don't have a lot of time. It's not an excuse, we need to make more time to do this. But I've been interested in the question and done some thinking and a little bit of writing on the issue of violence and understood, criticized violence/force and the question of God.

Anyway, after a while, I was feeling the need to do other things. For one, to get more directly involved in squatting. I didn't want to have to play any kind of a game at that phase. So, I moved out of it.

MN: You wanted to break out of the division of labor. Your special function as clergy?

JB: I guess I'll always identify myself to myself as a priest — but I'm no servant of the ruling class and I hate capitalism. Originally, I felt you could rework it to some extent. You have these ideals, kind of naive in a way. Basically what I feel is that kind of energy is part of the will to fight. If there is a need to ritualize that energy as part of a liturgy or a practice that's part of the struggle, then I'd like to work on that. Maybe there is no material base for thinking or implementing these kind of things. But I do know there are a lot of gaps in, the way I look at it, the

realm of ideologies and strategies and tactics for struggle that make some of these questions relevant even there.

RW: We have a lot of contact with the fifteen to eighteen to twenty year olds. I have two kids in that age range, and there is a real big tendency among revolutionary minded young people to both be vegetarians or vegans and to be into animal liberation a lot. These are some of the most radical people and the most radical bands. For instance, among the Rainbow Gathering, a lot of people consider themselves pagans. They see a need for something to take the place that maybe religion took, not in a negative way, but in a positive way. Because the culture here in the United States among white people is dead. More than any other group of people in the world , for US whites, there is only life at all when people are in revolutionary struggle.

You can say that about everybody in the world, but I think there is some life among a lot of people, like Italians, South Americans, Black people in this country and Puerto Ricans. There is some kind of culture, reactionary as some aspects are. There is something , and in white people it is dead, you know, total absolute death.

So a lot of people are searching for things. People my daughter's age make little altars, and they make flowers and candles and they read, they do yoga. There is an attempt to make some kind of connection to some meaning in life or something other than absolute total death.

And all these political groups that I've been in contact with since the late '60s, they are all totally sterile also. I mean talk about revolution, it's always in the sense of sacrifice, denying your whole life for the revolution, pleasure and all this. What sense does it make? It has to be for some pleasure in life. Why are we doing all this?

RW: Beyond all this liberation theology stuff, his definition of God is God is the people struggling for liberation. If he wants to define it that way, I have no problem, know what I mean?

JB: Another important thing for me is the ethical demand that I feel for — to put it in simple words — the struggle for the poor, the ones who have always gotten, you know, put upon by the pigs and exploited and stuff.

MN: Can we talk about the riot a little bit.

RW: Can I just say one thing real fast. I have a big prejudice against the word Christianity, anything to do with the Bible. I can't even look at it. I've been shown some passages of interesting words. Jesus said to people to go sell their robes and go buy knives, swords and stuff like this. It's interesting to see how they were organizing, but I can't read the book. I absolutely cannot read the book. My attitude is based on some of the people who I've known who I've seen call themselves Christians who are total pigs to me. So I have such a deep reaction I cannot even look in that to see anything interesting or positive.

Most young people today who are revolutionaries in the US have a similar problem towards Marx, Marxism, communism, socialism any words associated with that. There is an immense deep prejudice, you know, coming from the same reason — that everybody they see who call themselves that are assholes. And so they by instinct don't want anything to do with it, and it's a very positive at one level that they refuse all the leftist groups around. There is no problem.

This one guy from the RCP [Revolutionary Communist Party — Maoist] wanted to have the red flag leading the demonstration for the riot and they tore it down. They said we're not having any communist banners and by communists they mean asshole pig, reactionary — banners of these reactionary groups.

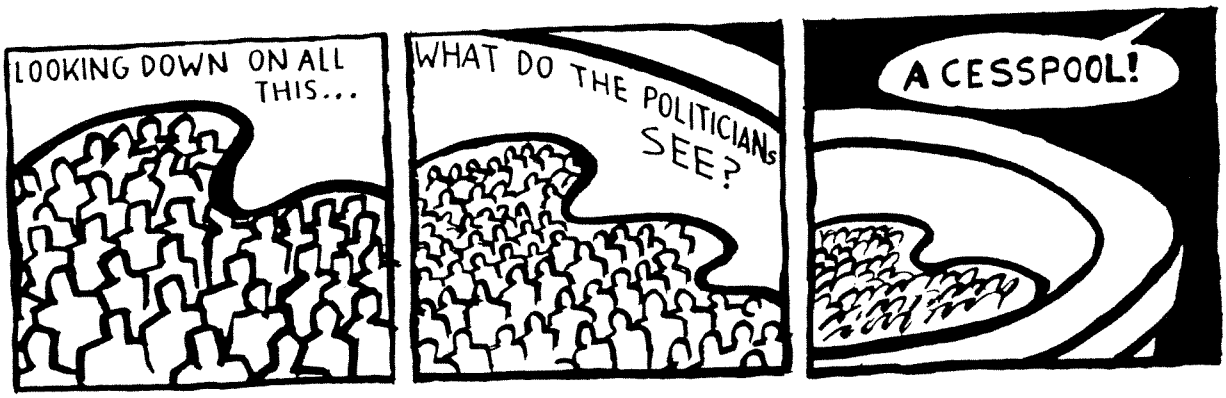
I LIKE IT HERE.
THERE ARE PROBLEMS...
BUT PEOPLE BACK YOU UP.
A FAMILY WITHOUT BLOOD RELATIONS.
A COMMUNICATIONS NET -WORK WITHOUT MEDIA
AN ARMY WITH NO GENERAL.

I don't call myself an anarchist, as far as what I understand it to be, but the people I see myself in the same struggle with are people who call themselves anarchists who also aren't anarchists either. It's just a word people choose because they can't choose these other words. It's a word that appears to be least compromised.

In any case, were not quite at that point that it's crucial to have to raise abstract theoretical questions about communism and anarchism. But we've come across questions that involve theory every step of the way. Specially with the riot, there are lots of things like intra-class relations and things that have been raised.

MN: Can we have some of your own background?

RW: I ended up in NY in '72 after being around different parts of the country, especially Berkeley, in the late '60s. I saw what happened in Berkeley in that as soon as they brought the guns out people changed their mind about the struggle. They brought the guns out and people were killed.



I stayed there 'til it got really sick and saw all these people who I had respected and who I considered to be revolutionaries turn around after People's Park. I think at that time I'd seen students as being the vanguard of the revolution, without using those words, just because I saw people around the universities moving and that's what I thought. It was only based on what I saw, although most people weren't students anyway and I wasn't a student either at that time. I just saw what happened and thought these people aren't going to do it and I left.

I came to New York hoping to find "Up Against the Wall Motherfuckers" and the Young Lords [Latino political organization based upon and allied with the Black Panther Party] and people I heard about who were into neighborhood organizing, hard core street organizing. I came to the Lower East Side in the early 70s and that was gone. But I found in the Lower East Side the first place I ever lived in my life that I felt at home. Other people can describe how it had deteriorated really seriously by 1972, you know, with the drugs coming in.

When I came here, to me it was the most beautiful thing I had ever seen, even though it had deteriorated. And there were still remnants of what had happened: like you would go to a building and it would be Puerto Rican and Polish and old women who hardly speak English and Irish and poor whites. At that time nobody who could pay more than $100 rent ever crossed that way. So anybody on the east side of Avenue A automatically, whether you were white or black or Puerto Rican, it doesn't matter you were okay. There was never any of "you're white, you're not from this neighborhood" kind of stuff that happens down here now because of gentrification, associating white people with gentrification.

In any case it was just incredible. People were so friendly. I could sit on the stoop and my kids — this is regressing but — they would just play with the kids on the street. It was just really warm and friendly and lots of people and lots of kids. Not really any possibility for political work around though. The only thing left were the day care centers — parent run day care centers which were all over, all over the place.

It's very interesting. It was one of my first lessons in how government throwing money to the community after the riots destroyed community organization. This is why I don't want to have anything to do with government funding. There is always such strings attached. There were lots of parent run day care centers which was the only autonomous direct action type stuff that was left. And they were destroyed to the point that you now can't even form them because there are so many laws against it. You have to have so many bathrooms, you have to have this and that, and bla bla bla, and no one can meet these new requirements.

And so what the government did, it came in and said, well here is some money. You know, just apply, we'll give you money, we'll fix your place up, we'll give you bathrooms, bla bla bla. And then you have to have a president and a vice-president and, they will become the leaders of the center. These people have to function in this particular way. Just by the fact of accepting their form of organization with these rules, you've destroyed the collectivity. It was gone. Totally gone, gone, gone. This is the main thing it destroyed — your organization, your cooperative organization. It would be possible to have a grass roots organization with officers. I have problems with that form of organization. But the form of organization that the government demanded separated these officers from the collective. They had positions, they had to report to officials, directors were paid, etc.

It just destroyed anything left of the struggle of the Lower East Side. So after all these years of the 70s and early 80s on the Lower East Side, it was very difficult to get anything moving. I just felt overwhelmed with this need to study theory, which I couldn't easily do cause I had kids. I don't want to say here what I was doing at the time.

MN: What influenced you?

RW: Besides the usual stuff. The first thing I read that helped me was reading Chairman Mao. I'm not a Maoist but I was at the time. There was a reason people were Maoists at the end of the sixties. I mean I could lay it out, there's reasons...You want me to lay them out (laughter)? Well first of all the revolutionaries in the United States, as far as I see it at that time, the best revolutionaries were Maoists. The black groups, the white collectives, the Puerto Ricans.

MN: What year are you talking now?

RW: Late 60s. The Trotskyists tended to be not there. I could go into it more, they just didn't have it. The anarchists were just like these madmen comic book makers, white always.

China at the time was...well, obviously your own government is your enemy, number one. So the enemies of your enemy are obviously your friends. China, Red China.....China! China! China! It wasn't Russia, it was China that people looked towards. You couldn't even write letters to China, you couldn't visit China. So obviously there is something there that is diametrically opposed to the state you hate, so you have that. Then you have also the fact that there was a recent revolution in China that was fantastic. You just read about the Long March, the way people suffered, and the war against the Japanese, all these things. I mean, you can't help but identify with these people, what they had recently been through, some big struggle that has happened that still has its mark that you naturally identify with. And also the war in Vietnam and identifying — even though China obviously didn't help like they could've — identifying with that

whole area of struggle, that whole part of the world.

And also because you can read Mao's stuff fairly easily — these little books and some of it is easier to read than other theoretical stuff initially. At least it was for me. I used to try and read Marx and Lenin. Even though I did well in school and things like this, I couldn't read Marx's work. I remember when I read the Communist Manifesto it was a major undertaking and I was so proud of myself I got through and read it.

Well, anyway, I went all through these years, went back and forth from Europe. Was working with some European group and ended up...

MN: Did you squat in Europe?

RW: Well, yeah, out of necessity. See I've always squatted out of necessity.

When I was in Germany, I was also in Italy before then, but I ended up in Germany. Let's see. All I can relate it to is when my kids were born. I went to Germany. I was in Germany from the height of the squatters movement to the end of the squatters movement. Just over the height, just when people started to get a little tired but still going very strong. And I ended up in a squat cause I didn't have a place. Same reason I ended up squatting here, you know. But to me it was a wonderful experience because it was the first real live struggle I had been in since the sixties in the US, because it was dead here, you know. Anyway, so it was a like a fantastic experience for me and I could go into it all. I mean, its positive and negative ways and positive and negative aspects.

MN: Go into it a bit.

RW: Well first of all, just the fact you need this refueling every now and then, and inspiration from being involved in struggles. And it really helped me a lot. One thing is that when you are in a real situation of struggle after you've read all this revolutionary theory, then it all starts reprogramming through your brain again, you know.

Then I was a year in London, squatting in London. I came back to the United States because my older kid wanted to come back, be here. I had no intention of staying in the US when I came back because I like to be in a place where things were happening and when I left the US nothing was happening.

But I came back to the US, this was the mid-80s, and got a job making five dollars an hour, found the cheapest day care I could which was $70 a week, it was the cheapest, and my kid cried when I left him and started running after me it was terrible. But it was the only way I could make it. Going to work, coming back, sleeping in a basement with this horrible mattress and the mice running across me. The worst place I've ever slept, train stations are better.

I didn't have money to pay the rent on the Lower East Side. I could've paid $100 a month like I'd always paid on the Lower East Side, but not possible. So, I got together with some people who wanted to squat and I still had in mind going back to Europe for a while. And we squatted this building on 8th Street and we thought if we make it two months we were doing good. It was a depopulated block and all the buildings were empty. It was scary.

It turned out to be a great experience, tremendous building on the Lower East Side. Four of us started it. We had arguments at the beginning whether to break out the cinder blocks in the front to make a door, because people said if we break them the cops are going to come and then we won't have a place to stay. And I said but I can't climb the fire escape in the back with my kid every day, up and down, you know. Cause you'd have to jump and then I'd have to leap up. So people got together while I was at work one day and broke the bricks and fixed the door. There were a couple of other squats around but they were not so active. So people helped and we got it going.

People just came by all the time wanting a place to stay. When you open a building you're filled the first day practically. But we basically let people come in who didn't seem to be junkies, or didn't seem to be dealers, who we didn't have some real incredible negative feeling about. In other words, everybody basically, almost everybody. And dealt with it from there. We had some unstable moments at the beginning, but we ended up getting a very interesting group of people. All were homeless and needed a place to stay. Heavily Lower East Side people, and then we had about 15 people and were going strong . The first battle was always to keep the front door locked, you have to do that, and having the group begin to function as a group, and letting people come in because of group consensus, and dealing with the inevitable problems that you'd have with some people. You know, you never know what someone's like until you live with them. Someone you may think is not okay turns out to be great and someone you think is okay isn't.

Basically the rules were no dealing, no hard drug use, and no violence in the building. In other words, we don't want people ruling by guns. That's basically the only thing people ever got kicked out for as long as we were there, and it was always after lots of warnings, especially with drug dealing.

Then when we have about fifteen people, one day who shows up outside our front door, RAIN and the Joint Planning Council (JPC), so called "community groups" and local politician types associated with the Catholic Church, from the Lower East Side. RAIN is a so-called housing group on the Lower East Side who pretend that they are for low income housing who are not, who are part of gentrification.

MN: Are they Government funded?

RW: They are all connected to the Catholic charities, who are basically at the forefront of gentrification.

MN: What way do they operate as the forefront of gentrification?

RW: Well, by doing what they did with us. By coming to the building and telling us that we had to leave, that we couldn't be there, that no one is allowed to go into the buildings, that everybody was a member of JPC, which is an umbrella group for all these poverty pimp organizations on the Lower East Side who receive government funding and totally sold out. JPC is an umbrella group of which RAIN is a member, and to be in JPC you had to promise you would not go into any of the buildings. So all the buildings would remain vacant, because they were supposedly negotiating a deal and they had to be vacant, but actually it was intended to keep people from going in and holding the land, because they do not intend the buildings for truly low income housing anyway. There's not going to be any low income on the Lower East Side, even though they pretend it. So we are saying, if you want to hold the buildings, go move into them. That's the only way to keep the buildings. And so they tried to kick us out. Basically they couldn't have done it without having guns, cause we weren't going to go and we didn't go.

And we went to the Community Board. We wrote a little letter about our group and explained who we were, cause they were just saying, you're not from the Lower East Side and you have green hair — we didn't have anybody with green hair then but — and we were heavily Lower East Side people on 7th Street. Three buildings between C and D.

These three buildings are heavily Puerto Rican, and they're squats, and they fix up the buildings a lot because they've been working a while on them, and they were really under threat to be legally evicted. And we had this demonstration, in fact a series of stuff to defend these three buildings, and it actually worked! Enough publicity was generated and the squatters on 7th St. had a good lawyer so that they could prevent being evicted by having inspectors come in and condemn the building. The public pressure helped because they could come in any moment and just evict everybody. But we've been able basically to stay ahead on the public pressure aspect.

So that's bringing it up to date. And from there on more and more buildings were squatted. We began to get our network developed by having to defend the buildings against eviction.

MN: There have been more and more run ins with HPD [NY City Housing and Preservation and Development Dept.]?

RW: Yeah, we would develop our strength by fighting against eviction and we'd go around and get each other, get 25 to 50 people around a building when they would try and evict the buildings. And these are basically illegal evictions. The police would come and say you had to get out and we'd say there's the 30 day law. We have a slight legal protection that's not totally been challenged, this 30 day law. It's accepted by the police if you have enough pressure. If you've been somewhere 30 days they can't just come in and kick you out of your house, they have got to take you to court.

This is our only legal protection. It's interesting cause we've been able to use it. But of course we can use it only because

MIDNIGHT DEMOLITION
Radio Talk Show, May 1989

I just wanted to give you an update on what's happening down here on 319 East 8th Street. The legal stay has been lifted and the wrecking crew in the dead of the night is on the top of the building demolishing it. They've begun demolishing the building with sledge hammers and they are hard at their dirty deed. We're across the street watching it being done and it's really sleazy. We want to protest in the most vigorous way and ask everybody who is listening to come down and protest tonight at 319 East 8th Street.

You might not be able to really get out to the block because of police presence - about 150 cops - but you'll be able to come out to Avenue B. I just wanted to say that they don't seem to care that poor people like myself lived in it for five years and tried to make that building a better building for everyone that didn't have homes before. Now they're retaking it all away from us because of serious collusion between City Hall and some developer or developers.

So now it seems like five years is down the drain, but I can tell you that the people of 319 East 8th Street and also the people of the Lower East Side are going to stand up for their rights and they're not going to give in to these developers and so the struggle will continue; you can be sure of that. My name is Willie Butler and I lived there five years so I'll tell you it's very sad day for me personally, but it's an even sadder day for the people of the Lower East Side and I think they should try to channel their outrage.

Q. Where will you live now?

I don't really know where I'll live now to tell you the truth. On top of the challenge of that I also have HIV infection which really puts a cloud over my whole life. I don't know what my life span will be. I will continue to live every day as I must live it, preciously. Really for people like myself, there's really very few options left except if you want to go into a concentration camp like hospices and hospitals, and I'd prefer to be with the brothers and sisters down here, a lot of mutual support for people, like one big extended family of artists and activists down here. We all know each other very intimately and I don't think I'd like to give that up for some sterile hospital room where I would be treated with a lot of disrespect. Anyway, I'm not feeling sorry for my own personal condition although I do believe the the issue will come up for people with AIDS or HIV infection who are homeless now who are in squats. Their needs are going to have to be addressed, and I think they should be addressed in a more humane fashion and let them make some decisions about their own future instead of this vast bureaucracy of corruption and sleaze that's been taking over the city here.

* * *

This is a reprint from the mag*World War 3*, (#12).
For info write to: World War 3, PO Box 20271, Tompkins Square, NY, NY 10009.

we've been able to get a lot of people in front of the buildings. We call the press and believe it or not we have often gotten good press. Unlike in Germany where they get consistently bad press they won't even deal with the press. But there's some liberal news people around that have been able to put stuff on the air which has helped a lot because we are really small and new and not that strong yet, compared with the European squatters movements. But we just put up a big enough stink and just stay there and don't open the door and barricade it

The whole thing is that we've been attacked consistently, over and over again. If you can use your attacks to always get stronger, to get wider organization and to learn from, then it's not a negative thing that happens. Their attacks help us to get stronger and we've been able to keep up until now. That doesn't mean we'll always keep up, we could have some big defeat, which is okay because things go up and down all the time.

ILLUSTRATION BY SETH TOBOCMAN

Right now we have a big challenge after the resistance to the park curfew (the so-called riot). If this happens the same way next time... if we haven't learnt something, and aren't able to do something better....cause no one expected what happened.

So we developed a network around anti-eviction stuff and we learned. And I, someone who wouldn't speak to policeman and who wouldn't deal with the legal system at all, cause that was my principles, I found myself going down and looking up the law and talking to policemen and saying, you know, well you can't come in the building without a court order. You have to have a court order to come into the building and bla bla bla.

The barricades helps to convince him. Yeah, it's clear to us without a good barricade you don't have any rights!

We had one case, one building, they made it through the first door — we had two doors — beat up some people, and didn't have time to make it through the second door before we had enough people in front of the building to stop them. And said you can't do this, this is not legal. Enough people, they call the community relations cops, then the community relations cops call the police legal bureau and they come back and say "they're right it's not legal, goodbye," and they all leave. And all these vans around the corner leave too. I mean, that's not going to work always, you know. That works right now, or it's worked up till now. We've been able to hold them off. If there's a point where that doesn't work anymore, hopefully then we're strong enough so that we have other ways to deal with the situation.

So that's how we got together. The squatters are all different kinds of people. It's very interesting on the Lower East Side — this heavy, very radical, young white kids who sort of flock to the Lower East Side, like people flocked to Berlin during the squatting movement. Because the squatters were basically not Berliners. They were like a few people here and there from this or that factory town. A few people here and there from some town who couldn't deal with the life there, and knew something was happening in Berlin and everybody went to Berlin.

So you have that aspect in the Lower East Side, which is a very positive thing. At the same time, if people are going to be on the Lower East Side, they have to be integrated with the Puerto Rican neighborhood. So people have to have a sensitivity which they don't have when they come.

MN: That's a frequent criticism. The big target is that there are a lot of young white kids not originally from the neighborhood, and they don't seem to have a relationship to the Latino community in particular.

RW: You see, some writers don't understand the punk scene either. Cause the punk scene also is maybe only half white. The people that come to my mind immediately are black and Spanish-speaking.

JB: There's a lot of non-whites in the squats.

RW: And if you're a punk, dressed like a punk, you can't tell if that person is Spanish-speaking or not, you can't even tell they're black cause you just see punk, you know what I mean. Some of the young white people you might see a lot because they're quite active. But you also see the young Dominicans too and the young Puerto Ricans, young blacks.

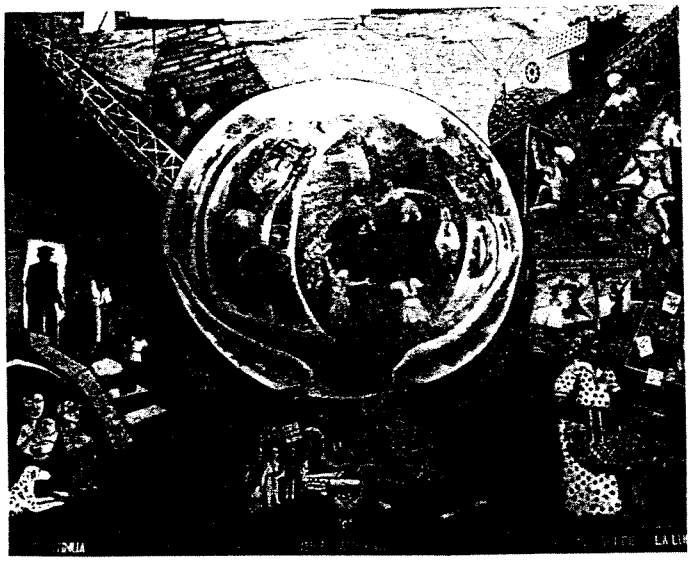
There is a political consciousness on the part of the young white people not from the neighborhood, which is happening all over the country. But as far as the population of the squats it's half/half, if not more than half black and latino, with some Asians. Look at all the squats.

Everybody who attacks us always attacks us for being middle class white people. In fact, most people who attack us for that are middle class white people. Yeah, simply not true at all. I mean I could go through histories of the things that some of the working class kids in this city go through and end up in the squats, and the things that have happened to them all along the line. I mean, it's like one of these Charles Dickens stories.

MN: Was there a representative group of people, racially or culturally in the activity around Tompkins Sq. Park?

RW: The activity around Tompkins Square Park is heavily black and Latino. It's like 60-70% black and Latino, if you look at the people in the Park who have regular contact with each other a lot and who hang out a lot. If you want to say 50/50, say 50/50, but it's not that. I'm just thinking of even the punk bands, you know, if you think only of the punk scene it's at least half.

JB: A lot of the people, particularly blacks and older Hispanics who are homeless, on the streets, or peddlers, whom are very numerous in the Tompkins Square Park area, are on the front lines against the police. They are the ones who are getting beaten up and were getting clubbed by the police prior to the July 30, the first rally, which was the reason why we had the rally. They were getting terrorized, just like they're getting terrorized now. They haven't stopped. Remember, homelessness is state repression of the poor, the human right to a place to live.



But in any case, most of those people, particularly the night of the riot, and in general in terms of being in a squat, whether coming from the street or the shelter, are not prone to want to get out front and draw the heat. This is generally true and you'll hear it from people. Like, you know, "hey let's go to the demo." "Hey, you know, we're going to bring the heat, man." Like, we're in here, we're holding this building let's do this and not do that. But the night of the riot, by the time there were 2-300 cops on the scene, most of the people there were.....what I'm trying to say is that people who were there, who were ready to fight, felt that they didn't have a whole lot to lose. Maybe they weren't on probation, nor had they gotten beaten up by the police earlier that month or whatever. They were in and around the area. But people had moved out because it was clear Friday night that a military operation was in progress. Friday night they came in — this was before Saturday night's riot — and occupied the band shell. Completely filled the bandshell area, which is a good, what, 40 yards or so across. With all sorts of trucks, computers and who knows what else. It was war preparation.

Needless to say, people in and around the park who had something to lose were not there. The people who were there were strong representation from a lot of the punk bands who use that park and the band shell. There were a lot of artists there, who came as..... you know, one of the demands on the leaflet was "Freedom to Be" and a lot of people came from that perspective. And then there were a lot of people there because they had witnessed the terrorizing of poor people who happened to be sleeping out in the park and were getting terrorized by the police. They were sick and tired of the pigs and came to fight back.

RW: But the thing is, if you're on Avenue A, that's what you're going to have, I mean, if you're on Avenue C then you're going to have a different thing. Because on Avenue A you're going to have all these people around who sort of hang out there anyway who are just immediately involved in it. It's quite interesting cause we didn't expect any of this to happen, you know, because sometimes you put out leaflets and people come. You never know what's going to happen. And we didn't expect it.

People had been really upset about the cutting down of the trees in the park, and the curfew. People couldn't believe they were going to have a curfew in the park. And people who had been terrorized a lot in the park, particularly Puerto Ricans — Puerto Rican families who were squatting would go sit down in the park and they would just be harassed by the police. And people would try and sleep on the benches and if they looked like a homeless person cops would come and bang the benches and make you get up. But if you were white and you slept on the grass and looked like a yuppie they just left you alone.

So there was a lot of harassment going around and people were obviously upset, but the possibilities of organizing something against all of this seemed sort of immense. Especially because the local pigs, the poverty pimps, the community board, and all of this, were just so heavily against us. We try and go to the community board meetings and they wouldn't listen to anything that people had to say that was reasonable.

You know, like something big happened. Had we not passed out the leaflets and organized it, well maybe it wouldn't have happened that day. It might have happened a few weeks later over something else or it could happen the next summer. That something happened from passing out a few leaflets shows that there is something in our neighborhood that was happening, that could be sparked off, that was going on. All the little things you do begin to add up — you have to know a loose network of people who know each other, a felt community. "Hello, how ya doin?" in the park and all this kind of stuff. This was the basis.

JB: There is a network of people who are connected already. I would say like three hundred, four hundred people, who are connected up, who share a similar feeling that it's really time to try to take the whole historical project a little further, who are talking, although sometimes they don't use the same language, they're talking insurrection, evicting the police, the representatives of the state, out of the neighborhood. They're talking localism — a very radical kind of localism. Where it will go is uncertain at this point. It's up to conscious people who're influencing it in various ways and so on. I'm not overstating this, I really feel this. There's a real mass thing going on out there.

MN: You said things blossomed and exploded as a result of the riot.

JB: There are two things happening as always. There is the state and its' machinations. The Mayor has a panel on the parks called the Blue Ribbon Panel on the Parks and the Constitution. It is an attempt to do the necessary background work as far as clearing the land for gentrification. Some ruling class type names, Cyrus Vance for example, heading it up. I can show you the thing. And they're studying questions around curfews, forcing people off public land and this type of thing, which is all part of the same effort of spatially deconcentrating the cities, of depopulating the cities of people who would pose a threat — a revolutionary threat to their control.

There's a machine of genocide along with the shelters and so forth. Remember, the shelters came into being to consolidate, reconcentrate those masses who had been dispersed. Sort of stage two of spatial deconcentration. The shelters are not a benevolent attempt at housing, but part of the plan of control and genocide.

So this is what is happening in Tompkins Square Park. This was pre-planned, and when we get more information on it we'll know what meetings were held to plan it, how the communication and so forth went out to involve all these police from different precincts. When were they notified? Friday night they already had a dry run. It's all there, it's just a question of getting that information and what it is from a military kind of war game perspective. The Tompkins Square riot, if anything, was a war game, a pre-planned attempt to quantify the kind of reaction that there would be to this kind of overt attack on a community.

You see, that's what makes it different from other forms of police violence that we are used to. There is Miami and so forth. This is an attack, in the words of the PBA, the Patrolman's Benevolent Association, Caruso [head of the PBA - Ed.], an attack on an enclave of people who are seen to be a threat, who they don't like. So the war game aspects of it are what it is that have to be looked at more closely. Sort of like the "strategic hamlets" approach in Vietnam. In any case, what that brought about, or what it reflected, was a number of tendencies or struggles that were in progress. They weren't created by the riot. The riot just manifested our strength, it manifested some weaknesses, but mostly manifested strengths. The riot forced the opposition, us, to jell, to come together.

MN: Enumerate some of the strengths?

JB: Some of the strengths are the incredible innovative depth of the movement, in terms of tactical maneuvering. There is a lot of creativity out there. And you know, the enemy they're very uncreative. We see that in squatting. There are almost humorous sides to it, which we don't like to play up. You know, when they come with all their brass to some of the buildings. "You gotta get outta here!" They line up and even McNamara of Tompkins Square Park fame came to a squat recently on a street nearby here. They had tons of cops: "You gotta leave here," and people said wait a minute we've been here for a while now. We said you enforce the law, and also had people there to defend it. Anyway to make a long story short they backed down.

RW: They had letters to prove that they had been there. They had letters addressed to themselves and sent to the place where they were living in the squat. You know, the thirty day law, cause they had been there thirty days. And it was going to be the first time they ever tried to evict someone in this kind of way for a long time. This is also the first squat that ever botherèd to get their letters together cause we always say, get them but you never have to show them.

JB: They pulled out their letters and the whole thing. They backed down.

Strong Connections

The efforts of squatters to reclaim buildings exemplify the anarchist emphasis on "self-activity," a notion that seeks to prove that individuals are capable of creating autonomous zones, free from the bureaucratic intervention that characterizes both "liberal" capitalism and state socialism. This desire for new forms of communal organization recalls the anarchist writer P.M.'s concept of the word "bolo," a reinvention of the familiar ideal of the " of the "intentional community" that strives to dismantle the "planetary work-machine." In his manifesto, *bolo'bolo*, p.m. suggests international links between local "bolos." Intimations of this sort of communitarian internationalism are apparent in a recent statement by independent groups in Poland that expressed solidarity with the "alternative culture people" who are being harrassed in the Tompkins Square Park area.

From *Motion Picture*, Winter 1989/90

Besides the Marxism-Leninism institutes, the institution that suffered the harshest purge is doubtless Prague's Academy of Fine Arts. The academy's 210 students went on strike, hired a non-conformist artist as their new rector, and fired all but 2 of their 39 instructors.

The new rector is Milan Knizak, a 50-year-old assistant professor with flowing, shoulder-length gray hair and three earrings in each ear.

After the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, he live for two years on New York's lower east side. "It was wild, very dirty, but very safe. I loved it," he reminisces.

Mr. Knizak appears to cherish free thinking and disdains the sheepish following of reigning trends. "Three months ago, no one was for democracy. Now everyone is. I hate that. It makes me sad."

From *Chronicle of Higher Education*, March 1990

RW: They made them show ID and they all had their ID. You know, they were together.

JB: Well that's what I mean, innovative, non-aligned. The movement is very non-aligned. The example about people coming and trying to opportunistically raise a certain flag and this type of thing and people responding like this [clicking fingers]. There is a real strong all consuming force out there among a lot of these youth, homeless people and elderly people who are fighting back. This is like Miami in a way. The depth of rage is there and the conscious targeting by the state, given the locale, New York City, and certain sectors of the population....

RW: This building that we mentioned, is a really good example of a squat. A couple of these anarchists types, then there is this guy who was sleeping in a refrigerator box in the park, this really great black guy, older, and a women he met when he was sleeping in the box.

JB: She leaned over the box and said come with me and they both went to the squat.

RW: Ohh, so she knew about the squat before. Anyway, then there is this very working class Irish guy. He drinks a lot, but a really good guy, you know, like really solid.

JB: Just put a buzzer in the building. The only squat with a buzzer.

RW: Also, some really young people. And this older guy — the young Irish guy was taking care of this older guy. So anyway, it's a really good example of squats, like who's in it. They've also done a tremendous job of defending it cause they've been attacked over 'n over 'n over 'n over again. They really want them out of this building.

JB: That aspect of it where you have all these different people coming together in a building from all these different places...

RW: Yeah, the Irish guy was sleeping under the bridge.

JB: And then forming a cooperative to work on this building because it's the only way. You can't even get a beam in the building unless you have a lot of people help you with it. It's a cooperative effort. People who don't know each other and they're involved in direct confrontation with segments of the state in the life of the building usually. Creates a certain terrain within which to organize people around. You're all outlaws.

In any case, what happened around Tompkins Square is that various tendencies were in motion: people were fighting gentrification, people who were doing direct service work around homeless; you know, there is a lot of feeding going on in and around the park and those programs have been threatened by Koch and company.

And a lot of people who were involved in anti-repression. People involved in the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) work — Emergency Coalition Against Martial Law — in the early days. It was formed in order to publicize the role of FEMA, which maybe I'd say briefly at this point, we felt was very important for a couple of reasons. One, the Ollie North connection.

But the role of FEMA, in particular, with the shelter system in the U.S. created a politics and a dialogue that expanded the bounds of the politics of homeless, squatting and so forth, to include an anti-war emphasis given FEMA's dual role, i.e. detention for those who oppose intervention as well as its role in funding shelters. What the shelters represent is a second stage in a way: create a dispersal, militarily speaking, and then you have a consolidation or reconcentration in these concrete shelters which really is slow motion death.

RW: They are making it impossible for any other legal place to stay except for the shelter.

MN: Could you address directly the link between FEMA and the shelters?

JB: Okay, there's a couple of things. One, FEMA was founded in Washington D.C. in 1979/1980, which is the same year that the National Coalition for the Homeless was founded in Washington D.C. Yolanda Ward was assassinated in 1980 in D.C. [See "Spatial Deconcentration," *Space Notes*, Midnight Notes #4]. FEMA is also a conduit for Federal funds to the United Way in New York, which was related to the National Coalition for the Homeless in New York here.

The National Coalition, the United Way, and FEMA and the Red Cross and some other agencies, the Salvation Army, sit in a national board which has to do with the management of the "homeless problem." The Federal Board was just appointed recently by Reagan. I can't remember who heads it up right now. It is a sort of think tank and coordinating body on dealing with the political/military problem of dispersed poor people under the guise of the "homeless crisis."

The shelter industry is a very booming industry and has been rationalized and legalized by the National Coalition for the Homeless and the local coalitions who have sued in the individual locales around the "right to shelter" and then sold the bill of goods to people that this was a joyous, momentous occasion that homeless people have won the right to shelter, "or the right to be sheltered," if you know what I mean. And they've done that nationally and it's been coordinated by the National Coalition for the Homeless.

MN: They get funded by FEMA?

JB Sure the local coalition for the homeless in New York receives funding from FEMA. It's not their major source of funding. But the point we were interested in making was that not only was FEMA involved in planning for emergency situations whether they be insurrections or earthquakes, Hurricane Hugo or atomic bombs, but they also get involved in planning around the "homeless crisis." They have all the — I don't know how to describe it, it's comical almost — work books and documents. Look at what FEMA's doing, particularly in the last 5-10 years. They've gotten involved more with HUD, so they're getting into the homeless issue. They do these studies, with an eye towards containing, pre-empting insurrection. They've gotten involved in the shelter system, along with work around detention. Under Ronald Reagan's Executive Order in 1984, FEMA - this is when North worked with them — would be in charge of incarcerating 400,000 Central Americans in the event of intervention. So on the one hand they're running these detention centers and on the other hand they're working with the shelter system. I find that illuminating insofar as it helps objectively to draw the links between issues of homelessness and anti-war. It's the same fight.

In part, our goal was to publicize the role of FEMA so we had a demonstration, a series of articles that came out. I think it's very important, particularly around detention and strategies of control on the part of the state. But for us the impact had to do with homeless, shelters, squatting, as a strategy to counter the state's plans.

CURRENT LAND STRUGGLES IN ZURICH OR IDEAS TO TRANSFORM A NEIGHBORHOOD

by p.m.

Most cities are too big to be really liveable. Actually, they are monsters, anonymous ulcers without any shape or character. They're planned to keep us isolated, lost, and dependent. Ideas to carve out specific neighborhoods of 10,000 or 20,000 inhabitants and to transform them into real communities with an inner life have appeared repeatedly. Yet autonomy doesn't necessarily mean things will be different. You can also manage the old shit "independently" - just look at the new nations in the third world. It is not enough to say "Let's split" - you must also develop truly new ideas, new ways of living together.

A neighborhood can't be considered in an isolated way. Ultimately, its life depends on what's going on in the whole planet. There is no such thing as "independence" or "delinking" or "doing you own thing" (except in your fantasies). What you do in your neighborhood (or what you plan to do) must - in its basic framework - be compatible with solutions for the whole planet. You can only do what could be done everywhere.

I don't want to go into too many details. Just keep in mind that industrialized countries of the north use up to 80% of this planet's production, 81% of its energy, 88% of its steel. Whereas the median income per person in the southern part of the world is $982 per year, in the north, it is $9,675 - ten times more! Instead of one car for every two persons, which is the Swiss average, we are only "entitled" to one for every 15 persons, the world average, and so on. All of this means that cars, extreme meat-diets, suburban life styles and money-economies cannot be part of our plans for new ways of life since these forms cannot include everyone. Since we can't live on $2,400 per year, which is the global average, we might as well look for another system.

Global compatibility doesn't mean misery or sharing the poverty, as even the defenders of the actual system can tell you. There are ways of using resources in a better and more efficient way, there is life beyond economy. Not old style "Communism" of course, but something new. You can also say: "Fuck the planet!"— but it wouldn't be wise. You might end up being a soldier in one of the wars against our sisters and brothers in the South. Unsolved problems, forgotten injustices, and repressed crimes will always pop up again some day. And then you will be put in the position of feeling that you would rather gang up with our enemies here than be the victim of our infuriated planet-fellows of the South. That would be the end of "autonomy," be it in your neighborhood or your city.

Lamentation

The city of Zurich has 350,000 inhabitants, with one million living in the metropolitan area. Together with London, Paris, and Frankfurt, it is one of the major financial centers of Europe. In 1980-81, an outbreak of riots with incidents of looting, massive destruction of the downtown area and big demonstrations destroyed the city's image as a paradise of absolute political stability (Midnight Notes #4, *Space Notes*).

Over 80% of the Swiss and 90% of Zurich live as tenants. Switzerland has the lowest portion of land owners in the world. There are fewer people living in their own house in Switzerland than in any "Communist" state. A Swiss household spends 20% of its income for the rent; for lower incomes this can amount to one third and more.

As land is so expensive in Switzerland, agriculture is only possible with big state subsidies. Even with these subsidies, a kilo of butter costs $15, while the world market price is $2. Average per capita income in Switzerland ($16,390 in 1986) is one of the highest on this planet. However, if you consider the actual costs of living, "being at home" is more expensive than anywhere else; that's why the Swiss are the most active travelers of all nations.

Land in Zurich is essentially a piece of dirt to prevent banks from falling to the center of the earth and melting. In the inner city, one square meter cost $20,000 to $50,000 as of 1985 (and has risen since). In residential areas, a square meter costs between $2,000 and $8,000. A two to three room apartment costs $500 a month for the use of the land alone. Such an apartment ends up costing $1,500 per month in rent once the building, maintenance and heat are included — 30-50% of the average wage. If you tried to live in the downtown area, it'd be 20 times more and you would spend a yearly wage for a month's rent.

The message is quite clear: you can't live in Zurich. The only possible use of the city is for banks, insurance companies and administrations of big companies. Their profits are so huge that the cost of land can be maintained at such ridiculous levels. Swiss banks are involved in South African business, they take care of Marcos' billions, and of Duvalier's account. They control a large part of the world gold and foreign exchange market and they launder drug money by the billions.

The last large sum of drug money—discovered in 1988—

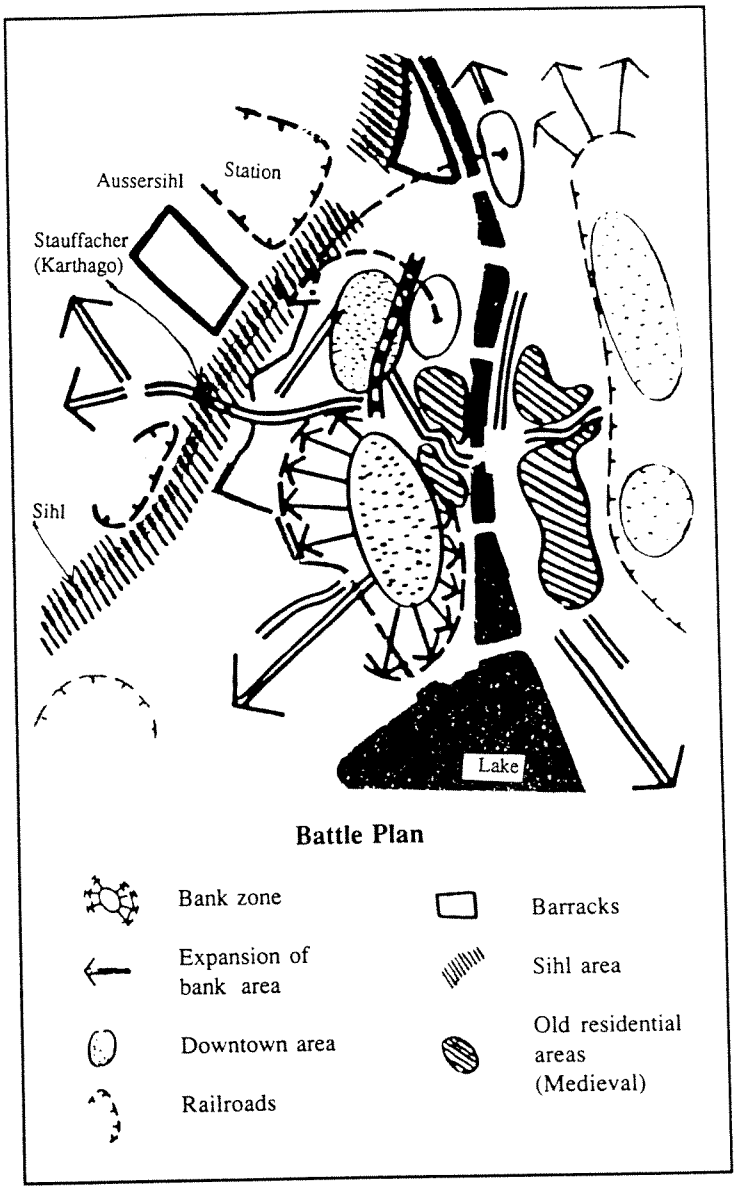
was one billion dollars. The husband of the Federal Minister of Justice and Police (and vice-president of the confederation), Mrs. Kopp (that's her real name!), was vice-president of a drug money laundering company, Shakarchi Trading AG, until November 1988. She resigned in order not to embarrass the state too much. But business goes on as usual. The banks not only control money and land, but also large portions of the state ("democracy"notwithstanding).

In the last ten years, 80,000 people have been forced to leave Zurich - they got suburbanized in a common worldwide fashion. What is happening in Zurich is not even "gentrification" but a deportation of anybody wanting to live here. Even people with higher incomes can't afford it. In the inner city, the battle has definitely been won by the banks. In the last ten years they've started attacking the surrounding residential neighborhoods. A semi-official battle plan drawn up in 1968 looked like the adjacent diagram.

The black shape is the banking area. Important directions of expansion are along the lake-shores and into the western neighborhoods, along the railroad area. In 1968, space was reserved for industrial zones, but these are being cancelled, as industry can no longer compete with banks, both because banking is now the international function of Zurich in the world capitalist economy and because industrial labor power is being phased out throughout the first world. Factories would simply bring the workers back into the area in new form.

The destruction of Zurich by the banks has nothing to do with Zurich itself, or with any special aversion of Swiss bankers against the people living there (or insisting on living there). Zurich is just one of those anonymous international places where planetary "planning" (by loans), supervision (getting back the interest), accumulation, and capital-redistribution is done. These movements will become more massive and faster because shortening the time of circulation of world capital is of prime importance in a period of high organic composition and relatively small profits per unit of production.

Switzerland is a "neutral" central place, socially stable (yuk), technically well equipped and ideal for these functions. Zurich will become even more important with the integration of the European market in 1992, the further integration of state-capitalist ("socialist") countries (perestroika!) into the world market, and the return of industries to good old Europe. A new Stock Exchange is being built and a huge $650 million service center is planned to cover the rails of the Central Station (called HB-Sudwest). Everywhere buildings are hollowed out to accommodate offices. Masses of commuters will be transported by a new system of express trains which are now under construction. The whole country will become a perfect little machine around its international function of keeping the accounts of the planetary work machine. Some ecological technocrats even assert it'll be clean, with lots of protected landscape in the cheap niches.



Aussersihl

One of the areas under heaviest attack is a neighborhood called Aussersihl. It's name means "beyond the Sihl" (river) and it's situated to the west of the inner city. On the map a long arrow is pointing into its very heart.

Traditionally, Aussersihl has always been a place for outcasts. In the Middle Ages, the lepers' hospital was here, the only egalitarian community that ever existed in Zurich (no joke!). The hanged were buried here, battles were fought. In the 19th century it was a working class neighborhood, soon with a larger population than Zurich itself. Most of the buildings still standing today were built by workers from Italy and Russia around the turn of the century. The neighborhood named "Little America" was built by Russian emigrants who later moved on to "Big America," to Detroit or Brooklyn.

Nowadays Aussersihl is a mixed bag of Swiss workers living in cooperative projects (mostly social democrats, mainly retired rail workers), workers from Italy, Spain, Yugoslavia, or Turkey (holding jobs in restaurants, construction, cleaning, and other service sectors), students, artists, retired Swiss people, pimps and prostitutes (many from Africa and East Asia). The percentage of people originating from outside Switzerland is somewhere around 40% or 50%. Very few Swiss families holding better paying jobs earning between $50-70,000 per year (with children, cars, and big Bernese dogs) live there.

Politically, Aussersihl has always been to the left: first social democrats and communists, now social democrats and

assorted radicals/alternativists/feminists/greens. Whereas the left usually gets about 30% of the vote city-wide, they get 60% and more in Aussersihl. Interesting referendums (tenants' rights, shorter work-week, higher pensions) are accepted in Aussersihl while they fail in the rest of the city or the country. In 1984 there was a proposition to declare Aussersihl an "autonomous community" that got a lot of sympathy among its population but was voted down in the city parliament. Unlike "better" neighborhoods, where fewer foreigners live, racism is not very strong in Aussersihl. But old Swiss people (retired workers) often feel a bit displaced when they see African people walking down the streets and Moslem housewives in their exotic clothing. The problem is not that foreigners are "strange" though, but that life is so isolated and there aren't enough places to meet and talk.

In 1932, Swiss Nazis, supported by the bourgeois parties, organized a march into Aussersihl. They were stopped and beaten up by socialist and communist workers right on the bridge to Aussersihl. Since then, Fascism in its official form hasn't had a chance in Switzerland. This history of struggles is very important in understanding the neighborhood today.

The invasion by modern-day Swiss banks is felt very similarly to that of the fascist invasion of 1932. And aren't they linked with everything that could be called "fascist" on this planet, from Pinochet to Franco to Botha? History is also important, because it provides a "code" for (dys-)communication among the different sectors of the proletariat living there. In the city, and in certain suburban areas, the proletariat is much more homogeneous than in Aussersihl - yet there is no social life, no culture of resistance, a more "fascist" and pro-automobile/pro-discipline attitude. So, economic interest, "objective" unity alone doesn't produce struggles - on the contrary.

A Successful Incineration

Strength comes from the land, from touchable history, from old and new places and possibilities of cultural exchange, from diversity, from "strangeness," and from certain "idiotic" fantasies of being somebody special. All these factors are lacking in newly constructed, rationalized, de-historicized projects in the suburbs and even more in areas of single family houses. This process is not a pure accident of the expansion of the city, but also an implicit plan of capital to disarm the proletariat (be it "rich" or "poor"). So from the point of view of struggles, land is much more than just housing, it is part of our identity. Historical, mythical, traditional and magical elements are essential and you still don't have to lose your wits because of this. (For example, geomantic tests done in the cellar of the Stauffacher buildings, the future Karthago, with a rod by a woman have

Car Wars

In Switzerland, pollution caused by cars led to the first resistance in the late seventies. People blocked streets and demanded a reduction in car traffic. Since then there have been protest demonstrations against cars in most cities. On the political level there have been attempts to ban the most dirty cars and introduce catalyzers, to close certain streets, to reduce maximum speed, and to improve public transportation. But it is not enough.

Attacking the car has opened many possibilities of struggles, both individual and collective. In Zurich, groups calling themselves *Rust* or *Basta* slash tires, smash windshields, scratch bodies, and firebomb car showrooms. Almost every week such incidents of sabotage are reported. Stickers showing a burning car and the slogan "Cars have no future" have appeared. Cars are burnt at demonstrations, not only to use them as barricades, but because they're cars. In 1988, there were demonstrations in many cities when smog situations became particularly serious. In Geneva, squads of angry demonstrators pulled car drivers out of their vehicles, gave them bus tickets and led them away. Does "habeas corpus" apply to people circulating in "civilian" armored vehicles or much more to those who have to live near busy streets? Whose freedom is more important?

The increasing refusal of cars has caused a unique phenomenon in the political sphere of Switzerland: for three years there has been a Swiss Car Party defending car traffic. This party has one seat in the national parliament and gets from 5-10% of the vote in cities and cantons (states). It's one of the most successful parties of the last few years, only matched by the Greens who get a few per cent more. Actually, there is a symmetry between the gains of the car party and those of the Greens. The program of the car party is right wing, its rhetoric fascist. Its president, Dreher, even proposed - jokingly(!) - to put all car haters against a wall and machine gun them. On other occasions, he proposed using flame throwers. The traditional right wing parties are a bit embarrassed, mainly because the car party has led to a radicalization of the Right. The Right is also embarrassed because the car party reveals loudly many of the secrets of the capitalist organization of life: that cars mean "freedom" (so much for this), that cars are "fascist" (and so can rightfully be attacked by any democrat without bad conscience), and that without the car the system must collapse (a good hint for us).

Since the car has become a political item in Switzerland, you can't just park it, drive it, or wash it any more as before. You are politically active in doing so. The car is an ideal enemy: it's everywhere, quite vulnerable, and visible. Individuals can contribute to the struggle on moonless nights, neighborhoods can block streets and get rid of planned (or actual) parking lots. The car is a big organizer against the system. No cars also mean: we want to put together the different aspects of life again. We don't want to self-deport ourselves twice or more per day to those places capitalist planners have assigned us to. Cars and computers, which are forms of self-isolation in the field of communications, are the vulnerable links, hinges, and connections of the parts of the system. In this function, these two technologies of oppression are destructive - be they less polluting than today and yielding 100 miles per gallon (as a French prototype does). Cars and computers simply don't bring us together.

revealed exceptionally strong energy lines.) Communication is pointless if there's nothing to tell, if there's no common code, no common history of spirits and struggles.

In 1980, a real estate investor, Victor Kleinert, proposed a shopping center for the buildings near the bridge to Aussersihl, the so-called Stauffacher. In 1982, a referendum against this project was passed in Aussersihl, but rejected city wide. Kleinert's residence was bombed in 1983 and he renounced his project. In 1983, a new syndicate took over. This time it was a group of 16 pension funds, headed by Buhle-Immobilien AG. Buhle is an arms production company involved in business with Central America, Turkey, Iran and Iraq. In January 1984, 70 squatters occupied the building for three days until the police forcibly removed them. Actions against the pension funds (handcuffing oneself to employees) followed. There was street-theater, a mock tribunal, a soccer match, and various little actions such as the successful incineration of a branch of McDonald's. In 1986, the city denied building permits for the project. In 1987, a new project was presented. The beginning of construction in now expected (or feared) for fall 1989.

"Der Stauffacher" near the bridge over the Sihl, 1988...

During this period, there were lots of episodes of squatting, sabotage and a few demonstrations. The rising rents and the expansion of office buildings have stimulated them. The pension funds, which have accumulated 150 billion dollars of "idle" capital, are legally restricted from investing "too heavily" in stocks and shares, so they are very active in the real estate market, helping to push prices up. All the struggles around housing have been defeated. Squatting is answered by police intervention within a few hours. Similar events in other Swiss cities (Zaffaray in Berne, Stadtgartnerei in Basel) were also resolved by police violence. Capital, through its political and state organs, has been very successful in isolating and repressing all groups that have tried alternative uses of land buildings. They have been able to exploit the cultural gap between the "chaotes" and the regular Swiss family. Whereas they are ready to spend some money on alternative culture, there is no money for alternative living.

Why Karthago?

Why resist? Why not do what you're told, work in the city, commute to the suburbs and spend your vacations in Kenya? It isn't so much that living according to capital's necessities makes you unhappy—on the contrary. Resistance can make you more unhappy and certain people get a stiff neck from it. There's just a certain numbness about this life. You see the neighbor's sons take drugs, you hear of suicides (the most important cause of death in Switzerland for men under 34), you feel an urge to do more shopping. Nothing serious, but no real life.

"We want to live in Zurich. We want to stay in the city because in it we can be part of a world wide exchange of ideas, products and lifestyles; because the city could be our home and world in one, a place for encounters with foreigners and friends." This is the introduction of the manifesto of "Karthago." It is the vision of a multicultural, multiracial city of functioning independent communities. A city not organized around money, but around people and their social and cultural wealth. This vision of a new city (Carthage means "New City" in old Phoenician) has many aspects:

Social: anonymous masses can't have power nor develop (counter) cultural identities. Extended households of 100-500 people can guarantee autonomy, a stable social basis to fall back on, equal possibilities for men and women.

Countryside/city: since their beginnings, cities have been designed to exploit the peasants. Without a new relationship between city-life and the production of food, this fact will continue to produce its monstrous effects (oppression of peasants, Third World problematic, agribusiness, erosion of soil). The above mentioned communities must therefore have direct ties to the country, a kind of city/countryside production cooperative. Heavy agricultural work can be reduced to a minimum, but the balance must be shared by everyone who eats. The new city will not be a dull garden city, but it must be a city with organic ties to the surrounding countryside.

Women/men: the ones who suffer most from a return to the country or suburbs are usually the women. Village life is no alternative to the city. Most "traditional" women's work can be avoided or distributed more equally in a lively city context. Large "households" are an ideal frame to free women and men from housework.

Cultural: city life can create the equality that is a springboard for more cultural diversity. Extended households are well adapted to develop or preserve an original cultural life. At the same time, the presence of different lifestyles on a small spot can guarantee against cultural sclerosis or the persistence of oppressive elements of certain "traditional" lifestyles (women, e.g., can more easily unite with women of neighboring communities).

Ecological: the resources of this planet are limited, but not the social and other pleasures they allow. At the moment, the metropolitan countries use about 80% of this planet's resources and they're ruining its ecological balance rapidly. At the same time a lot of people in the Third World are dying because of a lack of resources that are wasted by us. There can be a more equal and ecologically sound use of our resources, if we use them for more communal luxury (turkish baths, haute cuisine, big salons) and if we get rid of unnecessary and unpleasant uses (commuting, small bathrooms, small kitchens, work, packaging). An extended household can reduce the use of essential resources to 30% and still allow a more enjoyable life on a planetary scale.

Economical: most work that must be done nowadays is pure *faux frais* of our mode of production. Extended households could easily produce, exchange, and recycle so many products and services that the "outside" economy could collapse to a harmless 10-20% of its actual volume. Capital ceases to be "structurally necessary" if these "households" take over.

A concrete vision of such a planetarily compatible and enjoyable new city has been formulated in Zurich by the group Karthago.

How Karthago?

In 1987, some tenants still living in the Stauffacher buildings and friends from Aussersihl decided not only to fight against the invasion of the banks, but also to present a project of their own. Engineers were consulted about the best methods of energy use, architects volunteered labor, friends living on farms were contacted to estimate how much land 100 people would need to feed themselves, artists made drawings and helped produce graphic materials. In the end, Karthago, as it was named, was born—a concrete, practically realizable project that looked like this:

-The single houses are connected to one living space for about 100 persons.

-The ground floor is reserved for common usages like: a big kitchen, a library, a turkish bath, a bakery, a big hall, workshops. This space—together with a large backyard—is semi-public, between private and public. The idea is that all first floors in the whole city should be used like this and so allow people to walk through the city, always being away and at home at the same time.

-Floors two to five are extremely private, not accessible to uninvited visitors and not even to other inhabitants of Karthago. This private sphere is described as a "holy," individualistic space for various lifestyles: singles, families, communities, women's or men's groups.

-The roof garden is again a common space, mainly used as a retreat.

-A farm of 17 hectares (about 42 acres, or an area about 17 soccer fields long by 17 wide) can furnish about 80% of all the necessary food for the 100 people. There are already contacts with possible farms. At the same time, every Karthaginian will spend 10 days per year working on the farm, which is sufficient to do 3/5 of the work there, mainly unskilled work. The price of the food (organically produced) will be reduced accordingly - ordinarily organic food is prohibitively expensive.

-With very few but efficient measures, consumption of energy, and its cost, can be reduced to 30%. The most efficient technology is common living (washing, cooking, household). Other measures include insulation, ivy on the walls, thermal pumps, and more for decorative purposes, a windmill on the roof.

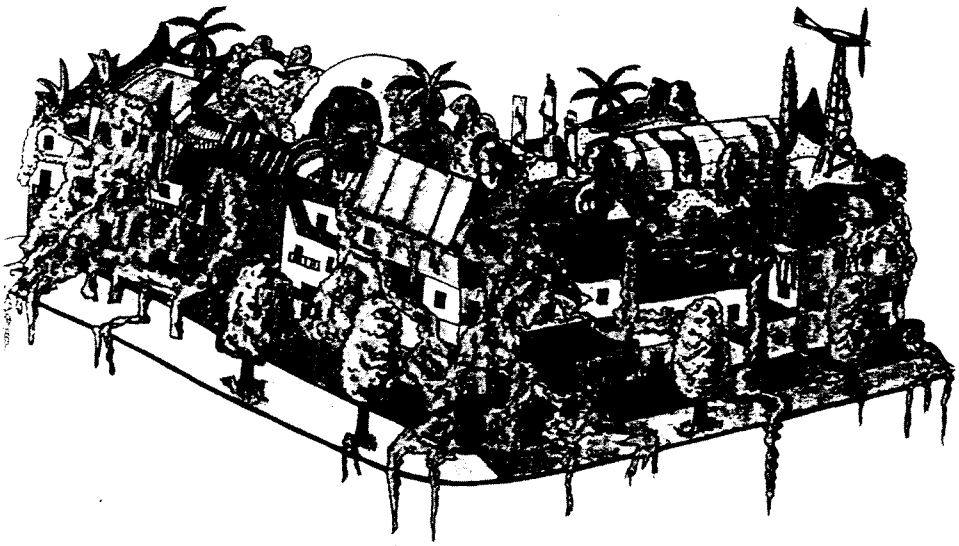
-In its workshops, Karthago will produce a series of goods such as preserves, pasta, bread, books, furniture, music and exchange them with other producers - avoiding money.

-One apartment will be reserved for ten non-paying guests. Third World people will always have priority.

Considering planetary, ecological and social principles, a city could look like this:

-People living or moving into the same block would form basic communities ("isles") of 200 to 600 persons. The neighborhood could consist of 40 isles of different shapes (see diagram).

-The isles would have about the same size, but from the point of view of architecture, cultural identity, lifestyle, language and inner organization, they



...and a vision of Karthago for the same buildings.

would be completely free and different. This diversity is the main wealth of the neighborhood. So, there could be: family style, community style, single, monastic, active, quiet, Spanish, Turkish, Italian, Moslem, Christian, Heathen, Thai, "yuppie," chaotic, vegetarian, alcoholic, Shaker, exclusively male or female, and mixed or just "regular" isles. People of the same inclinations could move together and also move out if they change their mind.

-Each isle would be something like a "cultural center" of its own culture. So you could walk around your neighborhood and visit them, sample their food, hear their music, listen to their stories or learn their languages. Of course, such isles can't be formed overnight, but rather must emerge by themselves.

-Each isle only needs one street of access. This means that only two big roads (East-West, North-South) are needed. Most other streets can be used as common space, for herb gardens or open-air workshops. As each isle only has one or two trucks and a few cars, almost no parking space will be needed. The highway along the river Limmat can be transformed into a river-side park with gardens, pavilions and bathing areas.

-A network of covered bicycle paths will link the isles. So you can cross the neighborhood in about 5 to 10 minutes. On the two main roads, tramways and buses (for goods and passengers) will connect the neighborhood to the city.

-Along the walls of most buildings there will be arcades, so that you can walk around without getting wet. All first floors will be semi-private, open for visitors. Even in winter you can wander around the whole neighborhood, sit down here and there, have chats or help friends who are working.

-Each isle is only the city end of a town/country compound. That means that for each isle there is a farm (or several farms) of about 220 acres located about 10 or 20 miles from the city. If each member works four weeks per year on the farm, the isle can feed itself almost for free. Under these conditions, leisurely, organic, intensive farmwork is possible. A small truck is sufficient to transport all the food once or twice per week. This saves energy, chemical fertilizers, space and packages. Waste can be brought back to the farm and be turned into compost or food for pigs or hens. The whole food industry becomes unnecessary.

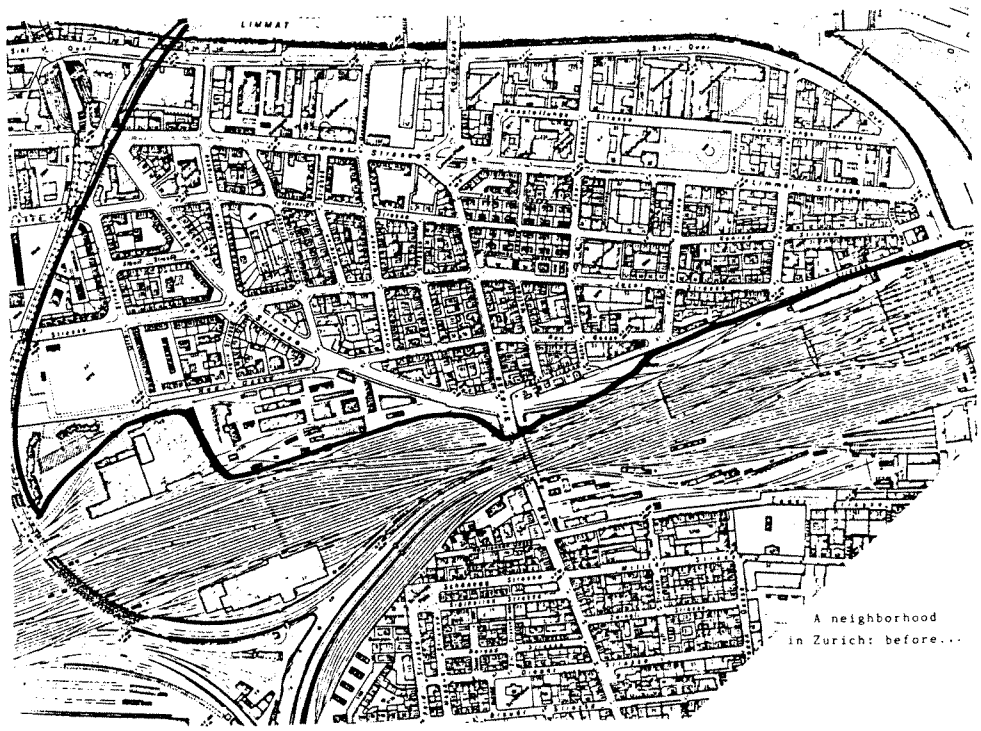
-The isles will have their own workshops for the treatment and preservation of food, their restaurants, depots, cellars and breweries. Individual cooking can be reduced to a minimum. Food, energy, water can be saved and at the same time, more care can be put into the preparation of meals. It's actually "cheaper" to have a first class kitchen in your isle than to prepare second class meals in your badly equipped little kitchen.

-Besides food, the isles can get into the most varied types of production: furniture, clothes, metal, machinery, books, art and construction. Products and services can be exchanged within the neighborhood and beyond. The community can get rid of shop keepers, inn keepers, small businesses of all kinds that are mostly parasitical and which demoralize collective solutions. No business is good business! Direct exchange makes possible access to a maximum of wealth to everybody without the risks of money economy.

-All the isles together can organize enterprises for the whole of the neighborhood: repair workshops for machines, trucks, taxis, a hotel for guests, food reserves, swimming pools, and cinemas. Instead of paying taxes, the isles simply donate work and keep these common enterprises going. This system can be applied city wide to public transportation, electricity, water.

-Instead of schools, there are public academies based on mutual exchange of knowledge and know-how. You just offer your knowledge by teaching a course and take other courses in exchange for that. Primary schooling can be done within the isles.

The project would allow its inhabitants to work only part time, as the costs of living could be reduced drastically. Karthago is not seen as a unique experiment or utopian island but as a model for a new life in the city for everybody. While the defensive struggle is going on, Karthago has allowed the activists to break the social and political isolation of the struggles for housing. It appeals not only to people who are looking for cheap apartments but also to those who already have found one, but are not satisfied with their life in isolation and very little space. Since 1987, Karthago has been invited by unions, schools, ecological groups, cultural centers, to present its project. Support has always been very strong. Karthago has



also taken part in city wide actions and demonstrations around the housing/land problematic.

In the buildings, a long series of (illegal) performances, artists' exhibitions, concerts and plays have culturally animated the neighborhood. There are Karthago books, a record, paintings, videos. In a symposium organized by Karthago in 1987, renowned engineers, anthropologists, doctors, agronomists and architects supported the project publicly as a solution to all the major problems of our society. Artists, writers and journalists joined a support committee. All this propaganda work has given Karthago a permanent presence in the Swiss media and has finally motivated politicians (left, center and green) to launch parliamentary actions to get money from the city or the canton to finance Karthago. A recent city wide vote went 59-47 against financing Karthago. Its cost will be $20 million, with $15 million for the land alone! So it's not just a cheap way of getting rid of disagreeable people.

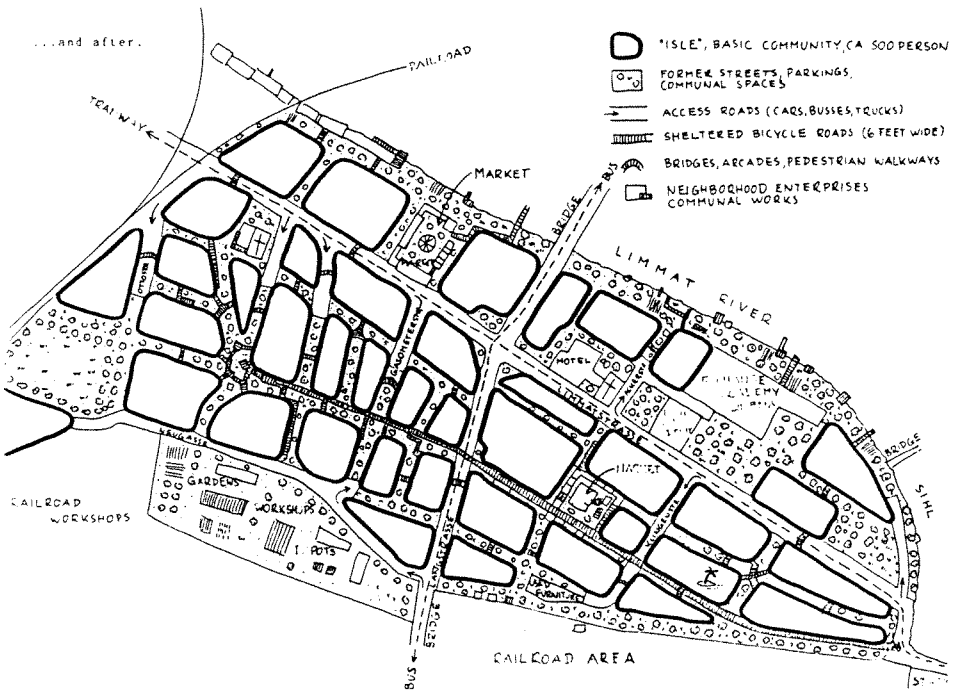
Karthago is a constructive proposal, a serious "utopian" project. At the same time - and not less important! - it is also meant to be a point of struggle against the New Enclosures in Zurich. It has made it possible to block a profitable use of this land for capital for eight years. The buildings are an "ugly" spot in an otherwise manicured city landscape.

The connection with the expansion of the banks and with their international role is consciously made. As a branch of the Swiss Union Bank opened across the street, a dozen sacks of coal (coal is a slang expression for money in Germany) were emptied into the lobby. In a communique that was published in the press along with photos, Karthago denounced the bank for ruining the reputation of the neighborhood because it's dealing with South Africa and other fascist regimes and laundering drug money. Actually the same banks that are active in and around the IMF and the World Bank to destroy debtor countries are also those that finance the destruction of our neighborhoods. This connection between the debt crisis and the housing crisis was openly made on banners at recent demos in Zurich.

At the moment, almost all legal possibilities to realize Karthago have been exhausted. There is one last appeal due to be decided in Fall of 1989. Whether Karthago (and similar projects that are being proposed now in the city) can be realized or not depends entirely on the development and the quality of the struggles. There is a new increase of demos (one every Thursday, others in between) in Zurich and other Swiss cities around "housing." The main problem will be the "attack on the heart of the Swiss state," i.e. to mobilize that 60% or more majority of "happy," silent and rich Swiss who make more than $20,000 a year and who still think they've got a good deal. The inertia caused by the illusions of "relative" wealth (compared to Uganda, Bolivia, Beirut, or even the U.S.!) will be difficult to overcome, but once they move, they can't be stopped. A double tactic of breaking the "peace" with demos and offering tempting new deals like Karthago can eventually achieve this. If you want to mobilize "yuppies," you must offer yuppie-communism. Moral lectures have never moved anybody - and if they have, usually in the wrong directions.

Bolo'Bolo and Karthago - An Author's Note

Karthago is seen as an invitation to transform the whole city and the whole planet. It is obvious that such a transformation can only be the result of struggles - against land-owners, industry, banks, and the state. Lots of intermediate steps might be necessary. Time is needed to bring people together, to create cultural identities, to study agriculture, and to get in touch with farmers interested in cooperation. Success also depends on what's going on in the city, the nation, the world. Modest steps in the right direction cannot be despised, but it is important to talk about the direction. The ideas presented in this paper aim at promoting such discussions. Which way shall we go? Shall we just try to mend a system that's fundamentally flawed or shall we look for life beyond capital? Plans for a neighborhood can be a good way of starting out. But it would be fatal to forget the big picture while doing so.



Note: A party to celebrate the death of Karthago was recently held in Zurich. Long Live Karthago!

*p.m. is the author of *bolo'bolo*. *bolo'bolo* can be ordered through Autonomedia in Brooklyn, NY.

JUBILATING; OR, HOW THE ATLANTIC WORKING CLASS USED THE BIBLICAL JUBILEE AGAINST CAPITALISM, WITH SOME SUCCESS

by Peter Linebaugh

1: JUBILEE. Etymologically, jubilee comes from *yobel*, a Hebrew word meaning "ram's horn." Ever since, it's been associated with music, a horn, a cornet, a trumpet, and later with singing. The cornet descends from the shepherd's *cornu*; the trumpet and bugle from the Roman soldier's *buccina*; these horns are instruments of gathering and militance. In the West Indies and the South Sea Islands the spiral conch emits a very large sound. It was used by the Tritons of ancient mythology, and by the Haitian slaves on 21 August 1791 as a call to the war of liberation in the first successful slave revolt of modern history. The first thing about the jubilee, then, is that it is heard.

You shall send the ram's horn around. You shall send it through all your land to sound a blast, and so you shall hallow the fiftieth year and proclaim liberation in the land for all its inhabitants. Leviticus 25:9-10.

The second thing about jubilee is that it is old. You can find it explained in the Old Testament, mainly in Leviticus 25 but elsewhere too. It comprises seven ideas. First, it happens every fifty years. Second it promises the restitution of the land ("it shall then revert to the original owner," 25:28). Third jubilee calls for the cancellation of debts. Fourth it frees slaves and bond-servants ("when your brother is reduced to poverty and sells himself to you, you shall not use him to work for you as a slave," 25:39). Fifth, jubilee is a year of fallow ("it shall be a year of sacred rest for the land," 25:5). Sixth, it is a year of no work ("you shall not sow, and you shall not harvest the self-sown crop, nor shall you gather in the grapes from the unpruned vines, because it is a jubilee, to be kept holy by you"). Seventh, and for want of a better expression, jubilee expresses divine sovereignty ("the land is mine, and you are coming into it as aliens and settlers," 25:23).

A prevailing view is that jubilee was an anti-accumulation device, similar to the potlatch or the carnival, that actually preserved accumulation. In placing restrictions upon debt, slavery, and landownership, jubilee strengthened a social system based upon money, credit, and exploitation. It was the brake that kept the motor running. Westbrook writing in the *Israel Law Review* says jubilee summarized the release law, the redemption law, and the fallow law common to the Sumerians, Akkadians, and Babylonians as well as the Israelites. It was a normal legal and agrarian safety-valve of ancient times.

This reduces justice to the opinion of judges. The liberating righteousness that is the essence of jubilee becomes the prestidigitating legalism José Miranda, the Mexican liberation theologian, warned against when analyzing the meaning of the Hebrew word, *mispat*, which signified justice or righteousness. Miranda would understand the critique of the American prisoners who say "in the halls of justice the only justice is in the halls." The theophany of the Old Testament arises only and exclusively from *mispat*, which itself arises from the cry of the oppressed, or *sa'aq/za'aq*, a far cry from the "just us" of ruling cliques.

Jubilee has a revolutionary meaning in our struggle today, especially in the base communities of the world. This is suggested by two examples, Central America and Palestine. Many of the base communities in Central and South America follow liberation theology. One of its theologians, Gustavo Gutiérrez, in *A Theory of Liberation* (1971) wrote, "poverty contradicts the very meaning of the Mosaic religion. Moses led his people out of slavery, exploitation, and alienation of Egypt." A liberation

Word for Word
EVERY 50 YEARS EARLY HEBREWS CELEBRATED WITH A GENERAL RELEASE OF SLAVES AND DEBTORS!
OBVIOUSLY THIS BECAME A SEASON OF GREAT JOY AND FESTIVITY!
12-28
THE START OF THIS IMPORTANT YEAR WAS ANNOUNCED BY A BLAST ON A TRUMPET.
THE HEBREW WORD FOR THIS BLAST WAS YOBEL... FROM WHICH COMES OUR OWN WORD FOR A 50 YEAR CELEBRATION.
JUBILEE

theologian from Palestine, Naim Stifan Ateek, writes in *Justice and Only Justice* (1989), "the land of Canaan really belongs to God" not to the Israelis. He explains further, "In Leviticus 25:23, the divine claim to the land is so strongly emphasized that the Israelites are regarded as strangers and foreigners themselves."

2: JUBILEE. To evaluate the Jubilee biblical text we need to know something of ancient Hebrew history. However before delving into that, let's sing a song. In England the suggested tune is "God Save the King," in America it is called "America."

HARK! how the trumpet's sound
Proclaims the land around
The Jubilee!
Tells all the poor oppress'd,
No more they shall be cess'd,
Nor landlords more molest
Their property.

Rents t'ourselves now we pay,
Dreading no quarter day,
Fraught with distress.
Welcome that day draws near,
For then our rents we share,
Earth's rightful lords we are
Ordain'd for this.

Now hath the oppressor ceas'd
And all the world releas'd
From misery!
The fir-trees all rejoice,
And cedars lift their voice,
Ceased now the FELLER'S noise,
Long rais'd by thee.

The sceptre now is broke,
Which with continual stroke
The nations smote!
Hell from beneath doth rise,
To meet thy lofty eyes,
From the most pompous size,
Now brought to nought!

Since then this Jubilee
Sets all at Liberty
Let us be glad.
Behold each man return
To his possession
No more like drones to mourn
By landlords sad!

The song is called "The Jubilee Hymn; Or, A Song to be sung at the Commencement of the Millenium, If Not Sooner." It was composed in 1782 by Thomas Spence, "the unfee'd advocate of the disinherited seed of Adam." The origins of the tune are obscure. It may have originated from the Elizabethan composer Dr. John Bull, or it may have been a German beer-drinking tune. It became the British national anthem in 1745, the year of conquest of Jacobite Scotland, and therefore combines the fear of defeat with the fervor of conquest, emotions also expressed by its galliard rhythm.

The tune has appealed to both high and low. French, American, English, and German soldiers sang it into battle during World War I, each with different words of course. Handel used it, as did Beethoven. Weber used it too in his *Overture of Jubilation* (1818), composed for the fiftieth anniversary of the accession of the King of Saxony. It is doubtful he had heard Spence's song. In fact, I think we can discern three jubilee traditions in modern history, the aristocratic jubilee (in the Vatican there is a "jubilee door," monarchs if they last fifty years have a jubilee for themselves), a bourgeois jubilee (which we will consider by and by), and a proletarian jubilee (which I believe Spence started up in recent times). A few remarks are necessary to explain Spence's version. "Quarter Day" is rent day which used to be paid four times a year. The first stanza quotes Leviticus. The third stanza quotes Isaiah 14: 4-8. The Isaiah verses are beautiful, because the social and the natural themes, or the red and the green, are logically related, as Spence understood.

See how the oppressor has met his end and his frenzy ceased!
The Lord has broken the rod of the wicked,
the sceptre of the ruler
who struck down peoples in his rage with unerring blows,
who crushed nations in anger
and persecuted them unceasingly.
The whole world has rest and is at peace;
it breaks into cries of joy.
The pines themselves and the cedars
of Lebanon exult over you:
Since you have been laid low, they say,
no man comes to fell us.

Tommy Spence was born in 1750 in Newcastle-upon-Tyne on the north-east coast of England. Close to Scotland, it's streets were full of the defeated of the '45 and those dispossessed by the expropriations of Scottish land known as the "Clearances." His mother kept a stocking stall, and bore nineteen children. His father was a netmaker. While working he listened to his son read from the Bible and then questioned him. Thus Tommy Spence learned to think for himself. Amid the proletarian life of Newcastle's keelmen and waterside chares, young Spence joined a Glassite congregation from whom he learned to take his religion in earnest, for John Glas (1695-1773), a Presbyterian schismatic, followed the primitive Christians as he understood them— no penal code, simplification of law, no accumulation of property, love feasts, Scotch broth, the gift of speech, and plenty of song.

3: JUBILEE. The jubilee story begins in the 13th century B.C. when, supposedly, Moses led the slaves out of Egypt. Three hundred years later Solomon and Saul formed the Israeli monarchy. Four hundred years after that, in 587, Jerusalem was destroyed and the Jews entered the Babylonian captivity. They returned at the end of the 6th century which commences the period of the postexile when the priests tried to put the pieces together again by collecting, editing, and copying various songs, laws, cultic practises, traditions, and oral memories. The Torah,

or "Law of Moses," the first five books of the Old Testament, was the result.

They merged several authorial traditions ("J," "E," "D," and "P"). José Miranda distinguishes two political tendencies within these traditions: the exodic, libertarian or Kadesh tendency, and the legal, covenantal, or Sinaitic tendency. The former refers to the revolutionary time; the latter refers to the sociopolitical counter-revolution under the monarchy. As part of "P" or the Priestly Code, Leviticus was written during the postexilic age when Israel was under Persian domination. Leviticus stresses the uniqueness and antiquity of Israelic regulations and customs, and falls generally under the Sinaitic tendency. In 1877 Klostermann identified a separate "Holiness Code" (H) within "P." It begins with chapter 25, and it is part of the Kadesh tendency. The 25th chapter represents a memory not of the period of the monarchy but of the prior revolutionary period. Thus, Leviticus 25 is the condensed displacement into a law code of an egalitarian experience of five hundred years earlier. It may usefully be compared to the Bill of Rights which salvaged a little from the revolutionary times that otherwise were so completely extinguished by the U.S. Constitution of landlords, merchants, and slavocrats.

Under the Monarchy class differentiation took place. This was the period of prophetic denunciation, the wrath of Isaiah, the lamentations of Jeremiah, the scorn of Ezekiel. During this period the jubilee is expressed as part of a visionary poetics of denunciation when the prophets attempted to awaken the people from their numbness to the pride and idolatry of their rulers. Their denunciations were written in the eighth century, two or three centuries earlier than Leviticus, and therefore closer to the experience of the liberation of the 13th century. Isaiah denounces landlords and the agribusiness men who depopulate the land:

> Shame on you! you who add house to house
> and joining field to field until not an acre remains,
> and you are left to dwell alone in the land. (5:8)

Michah identifies with the landless and he refers to an assembly of land distribution:

> Shame on those who lie in bed
> planning evil and wicked deeds
> and rise at daybreak to do them,
> knowing that they have the power!
> They covet land and take it by force;
> if they want a house they seize it;
> They rob a man of his house and steal
> every man's inheritance. (2:1-2)

> We are utterly despoiled: the land of the
> Lord's people changes hands.
> How shall a man have power to restore
> our fields, now parcelled out? Therefore there
> shall be no one to assign to you and portion
> by lot in the Lord's assembly. (2:4-5)

How did a visionary poetics become a legislative code? A class deal of some sort was made, that is, a weakening of the class of priests and landlords relative to the dispossessed, the debtors, and the slaves whose cooperation against Persian domination was purchased by the acceptance of the practical possibility of jubilee, at least by the priests and scribes who would have put the Bible together.

What was the earlier period like? It is important that we not think of it in ethnic terms; this is a salient and indubitable contribution of recent scholarhsip. The term "Hebrew" derives from *'apiru* of the Egyptian language; it is a pejorative epithet for an outlaw, insubordinate, and opponent of Egyptian imperialism. The people survived by rain agriculture (grain, oil, wine) and a pastoral economy (bovine herds, sheep and goats). Iron implements in the highlands of Canaan, rock terracing, and slaked lime plaster for water cisterns were technological changes of the late 14th century which disturbed the social structures and land allotment systems. The productivity of the earth and preservation of the surplus permitted the indigenous development of classes and the formation of small city-states.

Scholars have proposed three models for the settlement of Canaan: 1) the invasion model which is the oldest and most familiar, 2) the model of immigration and infiltration which Alt suggested in 1925, and 3) the internal revolt model first proposed by Mendenhall in 1962. Norman Gottwald writes, "early Israel was an eclectic formation of marginal and depressed Canaanite people including 'feudalized' peasants, *'apiru* mercenaries and adventurers, transhumant pastoralists, tribally organized farmers

and pastoral nomads, and probably also itinerant craftsmen and disaffected priests." The usual suspects in other words. He concludes, "A class *in* itself, hitherto a congeries of separately struggling segments of the populace, has become a class *for* itself" — Israel. The early literature of Israel, therefore, gives voice to the revolutionary consciousness of the Canaanite underclasses. Indeed, the earliest literature of Israel was a "low" literature both in its origins and in its subject matter.

The point is a major one and effects everything to follow. Liberation theology requires a re-assessment of Christian and Jewish religion. José Miranda gives a concise example. The Hebrew word, *sedakah*, signifies "justice." Yet since the sixth century A.D., it has been translated as "alms-giving" or "charity." The difference between justice and charity is the difference between equality and oppression, because charity is a relationship between unequals while justice is a relationship between equals. Fourteen centuries have passed where a single word's mistranslation has helped perpetuate the condescending, hypocritical piety of ruling classes who steal your cigarettes and either help you look for them or advise you to quit.

4: JUBILEE. Jubilee language is neither legal insistence nor didactic proposal. It is "a linguistic act that continues to have dangerous power in all sorts of contexts that are neither legislative nor didactic," Sharon Ringe argues. Its meaning is explicated through the experiences and struggles of the oppressed. With

Jesus this immediately became clear. Her argument turns on Isaiah:

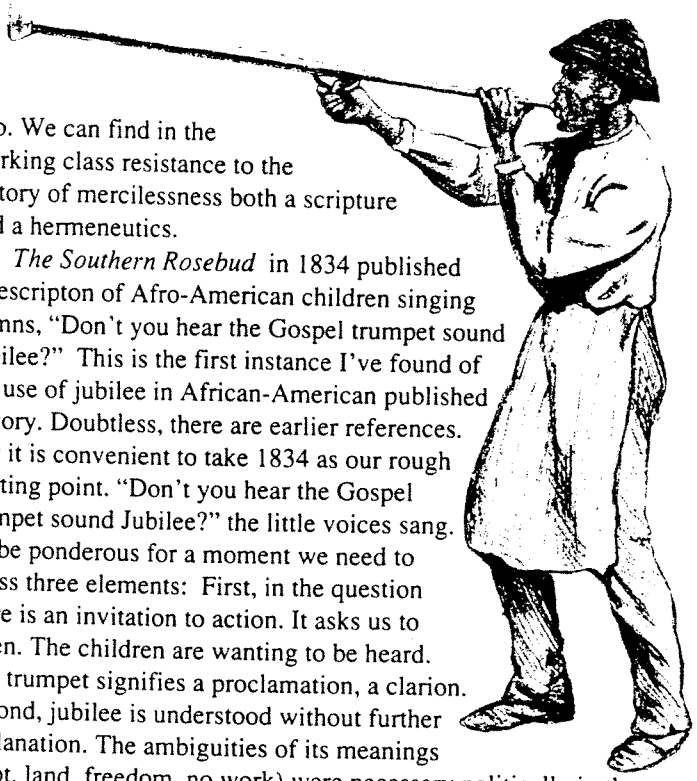
> The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me,
> because the Lord has anointed me
> to bring good tidings to the afflicted;
> he has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted,
> to proclaim liberty to the captives,
> and the opening of the prison to those who are bound;
> to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor
> and a day of the vengeance of our God
> to comfort all who mourn. (61:1-2)

"The year of the Lord's favor," all commentators agree, is the jubilee. It is clear from this passage that jubilee is not a social-democratic deal of laws to preserve a system of commodity exchange against periodic revolt. Isaiah has enlarged jubilee's meaning from the ameliorist management of Leviticus to a day of vengeance on behalf of the afflicted, the bound, the broken-hearted, the captives, and the grieving. Isaiah speaks with a defeated class. The class no longer begs for reforms; it demands justice.

Isaiah's words were Jesus' first. When Jesus returned to Nazareth and began preaching, he opened the scroll in the synagogue to the prophet Isaiah and proclaimed the "acceptable year of the Lord." The Geneva Bible of 1560 noted in the margins to Jesus' first preaching, "He alludeth to the yere of Jubilee, which is mentioned in the Law, whereby this great deliverance was figured." Then he said "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." This is the key. It is not a question of interpretation, but a matter of action. The *eschaton* is not of the future; it is present. Now. It has been proclaimed. Jesus was the trumpet. That is why they tried to throw him over a cliff.

So we go from Law (Leviticus), to Poetics (Isaiah), to Fulfillment (Luke). The liberation of jubilee is retained: remission of debts, liberation of the bonded, no work, divine sovereignty. However one thing is missing in this progression: namely, the material base. Nothing is said about the land. Is this a cop-out? Does it represent a defeat, substituting the talk of pie-in-the-sky for the walk of land seizures? If so, is this a reflection of the urban basis of early Christianity which after centuries of city living didn't believe it had a prayer in getting their land back? Jesus knew about proletarian exploitation. "Thus will the last be first and the first last," concludes a parable about the scheduling of wage payment to agrarian workers. They are also the words Nat Turner used in the great Southampton County, Virginia, revolt of 1831: "I should arise and prepare myself, and slay my enemies with their own weapons ... for the time was fast approaching when the first should be last and the last should be first."

5: JUBILEE. "'Don't never worry about work,' says Jim Presley, the Florida homeboy whom Zora Neale Hurston listened to. "There's more work in de world than there is anything else. God made de world and de white folks made work.'" The hermeneutics of jubilee is not restricted to antiguity. The working class experience with jubilee is closer to home than the words and deeds of an illegitimate carpenter's son upon the periphery of the Roman Empire one thousand nine hundred and ninety years ago. We can find in the working class resistance to the history of mercilessness both a scripture and a hermeneutics.



The Southern Rosebud in 1834 published a descripton of Afro-American children singing hymns, "Don't you hear the Gospel trumpet sound Jubilee?" This is the first instance I've found of the use of jubilee in African-American published history. Doubtless, there are earlier references. Yet it is convenient to take 1834 as our rough starting point. "Don't you hear the Gospel trumpet sound Jubilee?" the little voices sang. To be ponderous for a moment we need to stress three elements: First, in the question there is an invitation to action. It asks us to listen. The children are wanting to be heard. The trumpet signifies a proclamation, a clarion. Second, jubilee is understood without further explanation. The ambiguities of its meanings (debt, land, freedom, no work) were necessary politically in the slave south during the immediate aftermath of the Nat Turner's rebellion. It is assumed that listeners knew what jubilee meant. Third, the "good news" proclaimed by the Gospel links the old and new testaments. The good news is proclaimed now. Now is the time. It is not a question of the time being ripe, or of objective circumstances being ready: the trumpet has sounded. It is the voice of Ezekiel (7:14): "The trumpet has sounded and all is ready, but no one goes out to war."

The songs arose from the camp meetings and evangelical revivalism of 1800-1820. Exhorters, obeah-men, and ministers taught the workers the call-and-response style of singing. Rhythmic complexity, gapped scales, body movements, extended repetition of short melodic phrases characterized this singing and these "shouts." Musicologists see in them the influence of African songs, work songs, and Indian dances. The practise of teaching the song and the scriptures by "lining out" assured a close relationship between leader and chorus. This contrasts with the singing of the overclass, whose hymnody was read rather than heard. This points to further contrasts between the religion of the oppressor and the religion of the oppressed: the former was of doctrine, the latter was of action; the former sat, the latter stood; the former were indoors, the latter outdoors. Leonardo Boff, the liberation theologian silenced by the Vatican, said "After 480 years of silence the oppressed and religious people have finally begun to speak and have broken the monopoly on speech that was once held by the experts in the church: the catechist, the priest, the bishop." He spoke of the 1980s; we hear the voices earlier. The theological problem is called *ecclesiogenesis*, how a church is born. It is a class question.

At the end of the 18th century, Black and white congregations of the south were not segregated. The 1780 Baltimore conference of Methodists declared that "slavery is contrary to the laws of God, man, and nature." Within five years it suspended this in practise, permitting slave holders to join the congregations. George Lisle, an African-American, went from Savannah to Kingston, Jamaica, in 1782 and formed its first Baptist church

two years later. "Preaching took very good effect with the poorer sort, especially the slaves," he wrote. By the turn of the century Baptist congregations were segregated.

In 1800 Gabriel Prosser led a revolt of African-Americans around Richmond, Virginia. News of the successes in Haiti reached the slaves through sailors from Martinique. They were assisted by United Irishmen and by Jacobin sympathizers from Pennsylvania. Mingo, a preacher and exhorter, read the stories of Moses and Joshua. "You remember about the chillun of Israel, don't you? Well, this here is the very same thing perzactly," is how Arna Bontemps imagined it. Prosser was also a student of the Bible. He was fond of Judges 15. Sampson "smote them hip and thigh with great slaughter." "With the jaw-bone of an ass I have slain a thousand men." A storm ruined the attempt. Thirty-five were hanged. As a result the religious congregations were further segregated; laws were passed forbidding prayer meetings between sundown and sunup. Yet still African-American Christianity remained a religion of action — shouting, dancing, singing, weeping, jerking, speaking in tongues. The sabbath and the jubilee remained its theological essence.

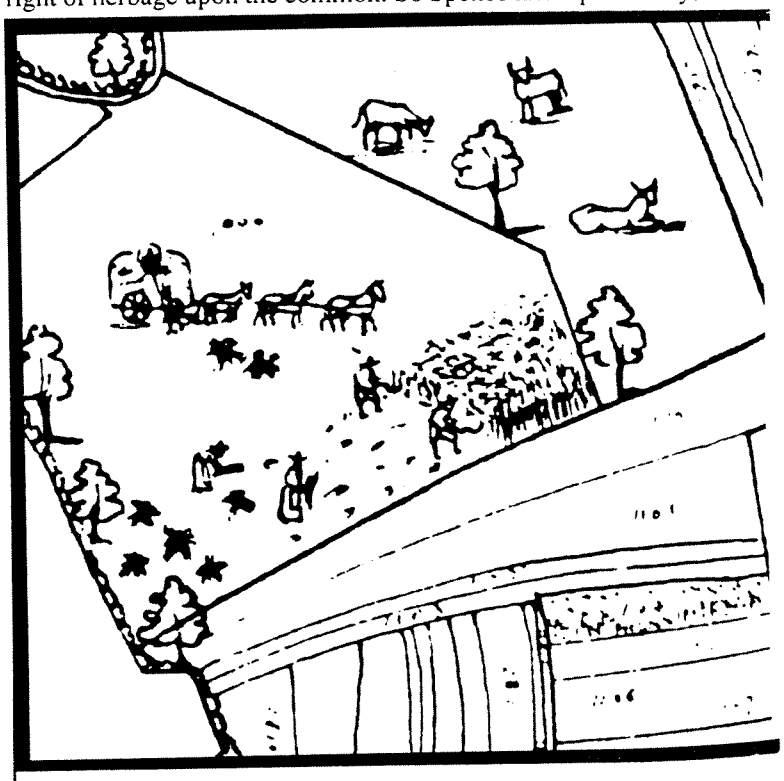
6: JUBILEE. Of course jubilee is realistic, and of course the ruling class at all periods assert otherwise. *The Interpreter's Bible* (1953) for instance finds "it almost impossible to believe that the [jubilee] laws ... were ever strictly kept or ever could be kept. We have a custom re-edited in the light of an ideal." The archivists of utopias must deny all alternatives. Yet, individual, private property in land is a recent phenomenon. The fences, the hedges, the split-rails, the stone walls, the barbed wire, the "No Trespassing" and "Keep Off" signboards are capitalist innovations of *meum et tuum*. Before them agriculture was conducted in open fields and the poorest held common rights.

An Englishman writing for the *Palestine Exploration Fund Quarterly* in 1894 explained how the system of farming worked in Palestine. The Ottoman Turks introduced taxes, an imperial and a municipal tax. To collect it the tax man needed to know whose land was whose. To the eye of the Ottoman tax collector the land all looked the same. The people of the villages organized themselves by who owned a plough. At the first rains in October they divvied up the land. First, groups formed of ten ploughs each. Second the land was divided into lots. Each lot contained several sections, or strips, so that no single lot contained just the best land, or the worst. Third, the *immam* put pebbles in a sack. A boy chose a pebble. This was the lottery. Once the lots had been divided among the groups of ten ploughs, the process was repeated within each group for the individual teams. A furrow of double width separated one allotment from another. A boulder, a pronounced declivity, an obstinate root, or suchlike other features of the terrain marked the boundaries among the strips. The system is ancient. The *Illiad* refers to wrangling "over the boundaries in a common field." We read in Deuteronomy 27:17, "a curse upon him who moves his neighbors boundary stone."

The English investigator of Palestine agriculture compared their system to the Irish *rundale* and the Scottish *runrig*. He might as easily have compared it to the ridge-and-furrow agriculture of own country. In the 17th century the parish of Laxton in the county of Nottinghamshire, for example, contained 3,853 acres divided in 3,333 strips which themselves were consolidated in four fields for purposes of crop rotation. Despite considerable differentiation in ownership (half the strips were held by the Lord of the Manor), the lands nevertheless were farmed in common, and no matter how small the holding, common rights of stintage, herbage and estovers protected the commoner from pauperization. In Palestine until 1863 most lands were commonable, as were the threshing barns. Capitalist farming insinuated itself as usurers loaned money to those whose yield could not find a market sufficient to pay the taxes levied by the Ottoman Turks. Mortgages encumbered the villagers who, if they defaulted, lost their lands and homes becoming *sherik-el-hawa*, or "partners of the wind."

7: JUBILEE. The original accumulation of capital in England was the result of the enclosure of land and imperial trade and conquest. The former turns common lands into private property by the erection of fences or hedges. "The Parliamentary form of the robbery is that of Acts for enclosure of Commons, in other words, decrees by which the landlords grant themselves the people's land as private property, decrees of expropriation of the people." Imperialism, plunders peoples of other countries and turns them into wage-slaves or slave-slaves. Furthermore, those who used to live upon the commons, being expropriated by enclosure, are forced to become partners of the wind and to sell themselves as wage workers to the bosses of factory and field. Tommy Spence was familiar with both of these tendencies.

The Newcastle Town Moor Dispute of 1771 taught him that it was possible to succeed in the struggle against enclosure. The bourgeoisie sought to sell or lease 89 acres of the Town Common. Tommy Spence's friend, Thomas Bewick, whose engravings continue to charm readers with their depictions of life on the rural common, had received his education thanks to his aunt's right of herbage upon the common. So Spence knew personally,

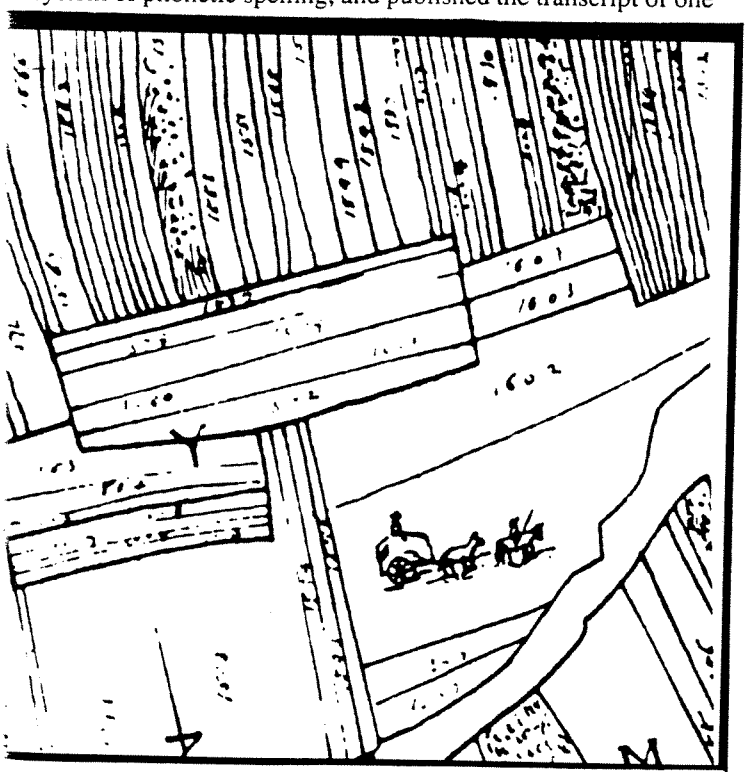


A portion of the terrier of Laxton (1632), and social labor process of mixed arable

from Bewick and many others, the importance of common land. People pulled down the leasee's house and fences and drove the cattle away. The commoners won, and herbage was renewed for resident freemen and widows. As a result of this experience Tommy Spence wrote and delivered his famous lecture in 1775 to the Newcastle Philosophical Society wherein he proposed the abolition of private property: "the country of any people ... is properly their common," he wrote. "The first landholders [were] usurpers and tyrants," he continued. They still are. Everyone else has become a stranger to the land of their birth. He advised appointing a day when the inhabitants of each parish meet "to take their long-lost rights into possession."

Within a few years Spence termed this appointed day "jubilee." The term had been around in England. A teenager, guilty of stealing two gold rings, went to his hanging in May 1750 with the "Ease and Unconcern as a Man would do that was going to his Jubilee," it was observed. But it was Spence who gave it revolutionary meaning in the era of industrial capitalism. Meanwhile, the liberal philosophers of Newcastle expelled him from their Society, not because of his ideas and not because he published his ideas, but because he published them in halfpenny tracts and hawked them in the streets and taverns. This was more galling than even his ideas, because it struck at the pretensions of the Philosophical Society which regarded philosophy as a closed discussion. What made Spence dangerous to the bourgeoisie was not that he was a proletarian nor that he had ideas opposed to private property but that he was both. He brought the ideas to the Newcastle proletariat, a coal mining and ocean sailing proletariat, whose power had already been exerted in the 1740 general strike when among other things they raided the banks.

He wished to be understood. That is why he developed a system of phonetic spelling, and published the transcript of one of his trials in it, *Dh'e Imp'ort'ant Tri'al óv T'om'is Sp'ens F'or a P'ol'it'ik'al P'amflet 'entitld "Dhé Réstorr of Sosiéte tw its náteúrál Stat.* That is why he expressed his ideas in wall chalkings; by 1802 the Prime Minister of England was informed that there was scarcely a wall in London that did not have chalked upon it the slogan, "Spence's Plan and Full Bellies!" That is why he expressed his ideas in song, so they could become part of the life blood of the tavern and the free 'n' easy: "Can Tyrants hinder People from singing at their work, or in their Families? Sing and meet and meet and sing, and your chains will drop off like burnt thread."



illustrating the strips of appropriation and pastoral farming.

Thrown out of Newcastle, Spence sailed to London, the hub of the English empire. He began to write about imperialism, the second main prop of capitalism. He understood that world trade brought useful things to people, and he also understood that it was work. That is why *The Marine Republic*, which he published in 1794, is important; it shows that his so-called "agrarian communism" was really a communism that included all capital — the mines, the pit-heads, the canals, the ships, the machines. The pamphlet tells a story of a sea captain who gives his sons a ship, "I do not give it to one, or two, or a select few, but to you all, and as many of your posterity as shall sail therein, as a COMMON PROPERTY. You shall all be EQUAL OWNERS, and shall share the profits of every voyage equally among you." They elect their own officers; wages were equal; they wrote a constitution of their "marine republic."

Two years later in 1796 he published The Reign of Felicity, a dialogue among a clergyman, a courtier, an esquire, and a farmer. The clergyman advises civilizing the American Indians with religion. The courtier agrees this will make them "submissive subjects," but adds that only conquest and expropriation of land can truly lead to civilization. The esquire remarks that they are the "only freemen remaining on the face of the earth," and recommends that the landlords of the Indians be chosen by lot. The farmer believes that this will introduce vassalage and slavery even though it sounds better than conquest or religion. He believes that the American Indians, unlike European workers, are "unwarped by slavish custom," and he warns them against the imposters of Europe even when styling themselves gentlemen, "Beware of them, for where they once get a footing, there is no rooting them out again." Spence believed that as a communist vanguard the American Indians would attract the slaves and disenfranchised laborers created by European imperlialism.

There was truth to this, particularly among the Seminole of Florida and the Cherokee of the Smoky Mountains, both of whom provided tri-racial isolate communities, as the anthropologists say. Otherwise, the truth was mixed. For example, Nathan Barlow, the New England mystic, led the squatters of Kennebec country in Maine during the 1790s against the sheriffs and land agents of the out-of-state proprietors in small bands of armed "white Indians." He wrote "every man to his right and privileges and liberty, the same as our indian nation injoys." They burned barns, rescued prisoners, upset courts, and destroyed writs into "attoms." Barlow was known as the "Indian King." However, it is doubtful that the squatters of Maine effectively allied with its red Indians.

Samuel Ely was imprisoned (and rescued) in Massachusetts and thrown out of Vermont, before joining the squatters of Maine in the "Insurrection Business." In defending the squatters,

lumbermen, and "Savages" he referred to the land laws of the ancient "Hebrew Divines." In 1797 he wrote his *Last Petition of an innocent Man, a Plaintive worm, involved in one Continual Round of Distress, Miseries, and Torture, or a Man persecuted in the Bowels of a Free Republic By a Systematic Junto of Luxurious Sons, Patentee Land Jobbers, and Voluptuous Joles.* He probably was familiar with jubilee, though he did not seek to ally, much less join, the long-fallow agriculturalists of Maine's Indians. Herman Husband, or "Tuscape Death," was known along the length and breadth of the Appalachian Mountains as a prophet against the coastal landlords, merchants, and bankers. The "Allegheny Philosopher" supported the insurgencies of the North Carolina Regulators in the 1760s and the Pennsylvania Whiskey Rebellion of 1794. He prophecized "a New Jerusalem" and regarded the squatters along the "frontier" as "the people of Israel." He illustrates the strength and weakness of this kind of jubilee: Indians and African-Americans were to have no part in it, on the one hand, and on the other, he summarized that green and "Don't Tread On Me" spirit of the mountains that continues to thrive.

8: JUBILEE. 1854 William Goodell began publishing *The American Jubilee.* It proposed a proclamation of "liberty throughout all the land, unto all the inhabitants thereof." It "demands of the American Government, and the American People, the immediate and unconditional abolition of American slavery." "It makes this demand on behalf of three millions of Americans already enslaved, on behalf of twenty millions more in process of becoming enslaved....."

The U.S. Navy occupied Port Royal in November 1861. Teachers and missionaries from the north, "Gideon's Band" as they were known, came to assist the Sea Island African-Americans in making the transition to freedom, or wage labor. Boston textile merchants were already buying the expropriated plantations. Charlotte Forten Grimké, a free African-American from Salem, Massachusetts, was among "Gideon's Band."

In 1863 she was teaching in the Sea Islands on the South Carolina Georgia coast. On Monday, 6 July, she wrote in her journal, "Were just in time to see the Dress Parade. 'Tis a splendid looking regiment. An honor to the race. Then we went with Col. Shaw to tea. Afterward sat outside the tent and listened to some very fine singing from some of the privates. Their voices blended beautifully. 'Jubilo' is one of the best things I've heard lately. I am more than ever charmed with the noble little Colonel." Colonel Shaw led the 54th Regiment, the first free, Afro-American regiment in the Union Army. Within a fortnight he led six hundred men of the 54th in the attack on Fort Wagner during the Battle of Charlestown.

Saint-Gaudens statue of the 54th Regiment on Boston Common

The bombardment of Fort Wagner commenced at 11:00 AM and continued all afternoon. "An hour before sunset, Gen. Gilmore (who had been most of the time on the observatory) came down and asked Gen. Seymour (who was lying on the ground) if he thought the fort could be taken by assault." "I can run right over it," he said. "How do you intend to organize your command?" General Seymour answered, "Well, I guess we will ... put those d—d niggers from Massachusetts in the advance; we may as well get rid of them, one time as another." There were 250 casualties. Col. Shaw was slain on the parapet, leading the vanguard. We see in this battle the historic contradiction between a war of liberation and genocidal population management. Murder awaited at the door to freedom. This dialectic was understood:

We are climbing Jacob's ladder,
We are climbing Jacob's ladder,
We are climbing Jacob's ladder,
for the Year of Jubilee.

Every round goes higher, higher,
Every round goes higher, higher,
Every round goes higher, higher,
for the Year of Jubilee.

Do you think I'll make a soldier,
Do you think I'll make a soldier,
Do you think I'll make a soldier,
for the Year of Jubilee.

9: JUBILEE. Dr. James Murray was a minister from Newcastle-upon-Tyne, most well-known for his *Sermons To Asses.* "Every inch of ground was claimed by some engrosser, and the cautious surveyer marked out every common, which formerly was as free as the light of the sun and the air..." he wrote. He supported the American War of Independence. When Tommy Spence was expelled from the Newcastle Philosophical Society and subsequently harrassed out of town (or did he think London contained greener pastures?), Murray came to his defense. He wrote some "queries" to the Philosophical Society including these three:

"Do people ever act contrary to any divine law, when they resume their rights, and recover their property out of the hands of those who have unnaturally invaded it?

"Was the jewish jubilee a levelling scheme?

"Would it be inconvenient to the Philosophical Society to read the 25th chapter of Leviticus?"

While Murray defended Spence, his political stance was

quite different from Spence's. We see this in the form of his defense, the ironic and the academic query presented to the radical bourgeoisie of the Philosophical Society. The query is a form of criticism that is within the framework of those being criticized: it may be sour or stick on the way down but still it is medicine, offered for the health of those criticized. In contrast, Spence having delivered his lecture broke with the Society.

Thomas Spence favored insurrection; he was a revolutionist who had given thought evidently to the practicalities of the overthrow of the English government. Certainly, the government thought so; in the 1790s it arrested him four times as "a Dangerous Nuisance" and as the author of seditious publications. Despite experiences in court and prison, despite the insults and death threats from members of the Association for the Preserving of Liberty and Property against Republicans and Levellers, he persisted in hawking his pamphlets, selling saloop (a hot drink of milk, sugar, and sassafras), and turning out his tokens. He struck one of these to commemorate the death of Lord George Gordon, the insurrectionist of 1780. In *The End of Oppression; Or, a Quartern Loaf for Two-Pence; being a Dialogue between an Old Mechanic and a Young One* he wrote that revolution could be accomplished by "a few thousand of hearty determined fellows well armed...," a thought that would have been impossible without the experience of the Gordon Riots when a few thousand, led by African Americans, opened the prisons of London and released the captives.

Spence was fully aware of the contradictions within the young English proletariat. In 1795 he published *A Letter from Ralph Hodge, to His Cousin Thomas Bull.* It is worth quoting at length, because its tone needs to be felt to understand its politics:

Dear cousin,

I am informed by some of our neighbours, who have been at town lately, that you are terribly afraid of loosing your situation.... They did not indeed tell me what kind of a situation it was that you were in, whether it was in one of the police-offices as a runner; in some of the prisons or gaols as a turnkey; in some of the churches as a beadle or grave-digger; or whether you were a door-keeper or ticket-porter about the treasury; or some other of the public offices.

Well then, you know Tom, you were a poor blacksmith and worked early and late to support a wife and a large family of children. This you used to do chearfully enough and was able to make ends meet, keep a little stock of iron, and could spend a social penny, either at wake, fair or market, like another man, before our rich neighbours took it into their heads to inclose our common. Then it was that you and I and many more poor people found a great alteration. We could neither keep cow, nor sheep, nor geese as before. Every thing now depended on the ready penny and to crown our misery every opportunity was taken to raise our rents and lower our wages. You know Tom, there was an universal murmuring and discontent through the parish and you complained as loud as any. The end of the matter was, you know, that the people rose one night, pulled down the fences, and committed some other outrages. You and some others were taken; you turned informer and every spirited man in the village was transported. You could no longer remain in the country and the esquire in regard of your services procured you your present situation.

The irony is muted because Spence needs to both reproach the many working class "Thomas Bulls" for their treacheries and to understand their problems which do not disappear simply because they found a "situation." While it is true "they rivet the chains of mankind," it is just as true that Thomas Bull lives with new cares — he must live with the anxiety of being followed, and with the knowlege that his children are bound for the army or the factory. The new problems are bound with the old. Spence explained that the high taxes, the inflation, and the national debt are as much a part of the oppression by the lordly overclass as the enclosures. "Thus all situations hang together."

Cease then dear Thomas to be longer the tool of those in higher situations and do not bother or teaze your poor brother John with any more letters about religion or government or French or politics. ... I hope those who have got situations of six-pence, eight-pence or even a shilling a day, will not think themselves so far elevated above their countrymen as to think their interests separated. ... Thomas, I conclude in wishing heartily, with all your old neighbours in the country, for a speedy reform in parliament and a repossession of our former common.

As a post-script "Ralph Hodge" recommends that his cousin check out the story of Balaam's Ass (Numbers 23).

10: JUBILEE. The first generation of Spenceans were full of contradictions, sometimes atheist sometimes devout, sometimes small masters sometimes pauperized, sometimes free-thinking sometimes religious, now drunk or now sober, and in this they followed their master who, despite his free-thinking lecture in Newcastle, was as capable of wielding scriptural authority as a Harvard divine. They lived through a period of massive theft: between 1801 and 1831 3,511,770 acres of common land was stolen from the agricultural population.

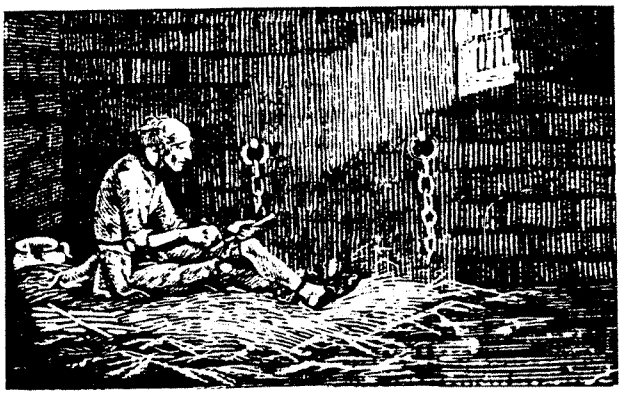
Thomas Evans was Secretary of the London Corresponding Society in 1798. He was imprisoned for three years, sixteen months in Newgate. After Spence's death in 1813, he formed the Society of Spencean Philanthropists making himself its "librarian." "I have lived long enough to witness the effect of enclosure after enclosure, and tax after tax; expelling the cottager from gleaning the open fields, from his right to the common, from his cottage, his hovel, once his own; robbing him of his little store, his pig, his fowls, his fuel; thereby reducing him to a pauper, a slave."

His system of history was organized around three saviors: Moses, Jesus, and King Alfred. "When Moses established his agrarian republic," he wrote in *Christian Policy, the Salvation of the Empire* (1816), "they were to live on a footing of equality, every one under his own vine, and under his own fig-tree." "The Christain epoch was ushered into the world on the broadest republican principles." In deifying Jesus, the Greeks, he believed, perverted the Mosaic republic, but Alfred the Great restored "the agrarian commonwealth." "The territory of a nation," he wrote in a phrase that became a slogan of the Chartists of the 1830s, "is the people's farm provided for them by their great Creator."

Maurice Margarot, a radical Jacobin, was transported to Australia in 1793 aboard *H.M.S. Surprize* with 83 convicts. He

plotted with the Irish prisoners. In 1810 he returned to London. Before dying he wrote, *Proposal for a Grand National Jubilee: Restoring to Every Man his Own and thereby Extinguishing both Want and War.* He calculated that every person in England could have five acres. Twenty years later Allen Davenport calculated that if the English land were divided equally each man, woman, and child would have seven acres. Because the population had increased substantially over this twenty years the discrepancy between their allotment estimates is hard to explain. Maybe Davenport did not exclude Ireland from his calculation, or maybe Margarot included only adult males in his calculation.

In London in 1804 a fellow cobbler gave Allen Davenport, the poor veteran and Methodist, a Spence pamphlet, "I read the book, and immediately became an out and out Spencean. I preached the doctrine to my shopmates and to every body else...." As a trade unionist (he was leader of the shoemakers' strike of 1813) and as an inveterate opponent of the legal system ("If you pluck a berry, do you not violate a law? If you carry off one single grain of sand, do you not commit a larceny?"), he walked the Spencean bridge between the radical Jacobinism of the 1790s and Chartism of the 1830s which is to say he helped to expand jubilee from the agrarian to the wage struggles. He was an advocate of "bread wages," or payment in loaves of bread, "as it in some measure shows the mischievous working of the monetary system; and the manner in which the working man was robbed of his wages." (The average wage expressed in pints of wheat in 1770 was 90, and in 1808 it was 60).



William Davidson was born in Kingston, Jamaica, in 1786. "I am a stranger to England by birth; but I was educated and brought up in England; my father was an Englishman, my grandfather was a Scotchman." He was three years at sea, he became a cabinet maker ("There was nothing worse than being a small master"), he taught in a Wesleyan Sunday School, he read Tom Paine, he was secretary to the shoemakers' trade union. Almost six foot he was admired for his courage and his strength. At a demonstration he protected the black flag with skull and cross bones, "Let us die like Men and not be sold like Slaves," the flag said.

On May Day 1820 he was hanged and decapitated as one of the Cato Street conspirators. The idea of "the West End job" was to attack the cabinet at dinner and assassinate its members, the Lord Chancellor, the Lord of the Treasury, the Secretary of War, Castlereagh at the Home Department, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Master of the Mint, the President of the India Board, and the Duke of Wellington. This was to spark attacks elsewhere in London at the Mansion House and Bank of England where a Provisional Government would be immediately established. Cannon were to be seized from the Artillery Ground. It was proposed to plunder the Bank of England, but "the Books should not be destroyed; as they would then know who had property there." Insurrections in the north of England were anticipated. Davidson in London acted as liaison with the Irish, and he was active in stockpiling arms. At the gallows he walked "with a firm and steady step." "Like Isaiah it might be said of him, 'He was persecuted, yet he opened not his mouth.'" By 1820 jubilee had become international, even pan-ethnic; it was part of the self-activity of the working-class; it was associated with insurrectionary prophecy and insurrectionary deeds.

William Davidson

11: JUBILEE. Robert Wedderburn was born in Jamaica in 1762 or 1763. His father was a planter. His mother, Rosanna, was an African-American slave on the estate of Lady Douglas. His father sold his mother while she was pregnant with Robert. He was raised by "Talkee Amy" his grandmother, a Kingston merchant, smuggler, and conjure woman. At the age of 11 he saw her flogged by a white man who fancied she had bewitched his uncle's ship causing it to be captured. In 1778 Wedderburn came to England. He learned gunnery; he enlisted on a privateer. He was present at the Gordon Riots, and was familiar with its Afro-American leadership. He was a jobbing tailor. In 1813 he met Thomas Spence, and doubtless influenced him. In the following year, before he died, Spence published in *The Giant-Killer*, lines indicating that influence, because they put the revolutionary vanguard among the West Indian workers:

For who can tell but the Millenium
May take its rise from my poor Cranium?
And who knows but it God may please
It should come by the West Indies?

If Spence learned about slavery from Wedderburn, Wedderburn learned about jubilee from Spence. Robert Wedderburn joined the Society of Spencean Philanthropists which an Act of Parliament in 1817 was designed to suppress. He was a licensed preacher. He led a discussion meeting at the Hopkins Street Chapel where the scriptures were ridiculed. He summarized Christ's teaching in three commands: "acknowledge no king; - acknowledge no priest; - acknowledge no father." He called the Wesleyan missionairies vipers. He was a free thinker.

Wedderburn, like many of the post-war Spenceans, was a poor proletarian. This means: a) he had little money, and b) he obtained money by any means necessary. In October 1813 he had "a near miss on a charge of theft." Again "an unsuccessful action against him in 1817 for stealing from a government-contracted master tailor" was charged against him. Finally in the winter of 1830 he was sentenced to two years at hard labour for keeping a bawdy house. These charges require different evaluations. The charge of bawdy-house keeping indicates the Jamaican's refusal to accept the crushing Malthusian attempt to control sexuality and organize that repressive, reproductive policy characteristic of the Victorian Poor Laws.

The struggle to preserve the commons, it must be emphasized, was not restricted to the common rights of field, wood, and copse, but belonged also to workshop, mine, and wharf; that is to say, the struggle was not merely rural and agrarian but also urban and proletarian. This provides us with the material basis to understand Wedderburn's politcial relations in the first two decades. A pair of couplets summarizes the relation between enclosure and criminalization:

The law locks up the man or woman
Who steals the goose from off the common
But lets the greater villain loose
Who steals the common from the goose.

Many of the radicals — we might call them artisanal radicals — accepted capitalist redefinitions of property. They accepted the wage relationship, the nub of capitalism. Tom Paine's *Rights of Man* was the most eloquent manifesto of the artisans' position. It was answered by Mary Wollstonecraft, *The Rights of Women*, and by Tommy Spence, *The Rights of Infants; Or, the Imprescriptable Right of MOTHER'S to such a Share of the Elements as is Sufficient to Enable them to Suckle and Bring up their Young* (1796). It contains a detailed attack on Paine It shows Spence's appreciation of the pusillaninmity of the men of the English proletariat: "we have found our husbands, to their indelible shame, woefully negligent and deficient about their own rights, as well as those of their wives and infants, we women, mean to take up the business ourselves."

Spence's powers were not expressed with greater force than in this pamphlet written in a year of starvation, war, enclosure, and Thomas Malthus. "Have not the foxes holes, and the birds of the air nests, and shall the children of men have not where to lay their heads? Have brute mothers a right to eat grass, and the food they like best, to engender milk in their dugs, for the nourihsment of their young, and shall the mothers of infants be denied such a right? Is not this earth our common also, as well as it is the common of brutes? May we not eat herbs, berries, or nuts as well as other creatures? Have we not a right to hunt and prowl for prey with she-wolves? And have we not a right to fish with she-otters? Or may we not dig coals or cut wood for fuel? Nay, does nature provide a luxuriant and abundant feast for all her numerous tribes of animals except us? As if sorrow were our portion alone, and as if we and our helpless babes came into their world only to weep over each other?" These are not the words of

the proud artisan, but the cry of the oppressed — urban, unwaged, young, female, and enslaved.

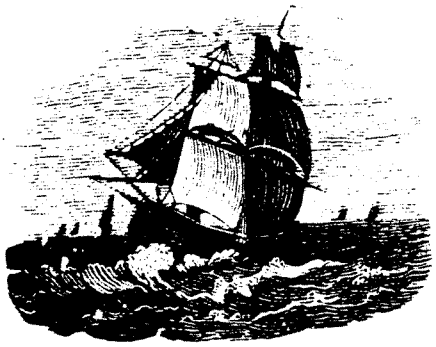
In 1817 Robert Wedderburn wrote *The Axe Laid to the Root; Or, a Fatal Blow to Oppressors, being an Address to the Planters and Negroes of the Island of Jamaica* in which he opposed capital punishment, suggested annual strikes, warned against petitioning, and advised taking "warning by the sufferings of the European poor, and never give up your lands." It caused consternation in the planters assembly of Jamaica. He introduced Spencean ideas into Jamaica. After Peterloo he called for the arming of the English proletariat parts of which were ready, like the Halifax weavers who carried a banner in 1819 saying "We groan, being burdened, waiting to be delivered, but we rejoice in hopes of a Jubilee."

He was a pamphleteer, writing *High-Heel'd Shoes for Dwarfs in Holiness* and *Cast-Iron Parsons* where he told how he visited St. Paul's, Shadwell, on the London waterfront, and asked the parson whether the church was built of brick or stone, and was answered "neither but cast-iron, at which he overheard an apple woman saying "Would to God the Parsons were cast-iron too." He thought this was a splendid idea. "Finding that the routine duty required of the Clergy of the legitimate Church was so completely mechanical, and that nothing was so much in vogue as the dispensing with human labour by the means of machinery, it struck me that it might one day be possible to substitute A CAST-IRON PARSON." It could be oiled and kept fresh in a closet to be rolled out on Sundays. In fact he extended the idea to making a clock-work school master to teach the sciences, he called his invention a "TECHNICATHOLICAUTO-MATOPPANTOPPIDON". As a postscript he advised making a cast-iron King. He was jailed for blasphemy. Wedderburn enlarged jubilee's meaning besides extending it to Jamaica. It was proletarian; it rejected capitalist notions of thievery; it held no illusions about machinery.

12: JUBILEE. Denmark Vesey was born in 1767, probably in St. Thomas, Virgin Islands which was under Danish suzereignty at the time, hence the name of the man. As a young man he worshipped with the Moravians, he slaved for three months in St. Domingue, he was skilled as a fisherman, marketman, and carpenter. He spoke several languages. His master, the sea captain Vesey, tired of the slave trade and settled in Charlestown, South Carolina, during the turbulent decade of the 1790s. It is possible that Denmark Vesey heard Francis Asbury preach in Charlestown in that decade, because we know that he preached to Afro-Americans and we know that he preached there on the text of Isaiah 61.

> The spirit of the Lord God is upon me
> because the Lord has anointed me;
> he has sent me to bring good news to the humble,
> to bind up the broken-hearted,
> to proclaim liberty to capitives and release to those in prison;
> to proclaim a year of the Lord's favor and a day of vengeance of our God.

In 1800 Denmark Vesey won the lottery and bought his freedom. He became active in the free Black community and in the Methodist conference which in 1815 was running ten to one in favor of African-American membership. In 1817 Vesey participated in the schism of the conference, and helped to form the African Association of Methodists. International events helped to deepen his Biblical hermeneutics, so to speak. The republic of freed African-Americans in Haiti was consolidated, and there is some evidence that one of Vesey's fellow conspirators, Monday Gell, corresponded with the president of the Haiti. While Haiti offered an example of hope, the destruction of Fort Negro, a native American and African American sanctuary led by a fugitive slave named Garson and a Choctaw chief on the Apalachicola River in Florida, by a devastating bombardment in July 1816, offered an example of renewed anger, as men, women, and children were blown to smithereens, and a caution that it was always necessary to estimate the range of the enemy's cannon.



During this time he was harrassed and physically attacked. In 1809 the Negro steward of the ship *Minerva* introduced insurrectionary pamphlets into Charlestown. Vesey read these, and read them aloud. As he did the Bible. In 1820 the slavocracy passed a law against "incendiary publications." He himself led an insurrection with thirty other conspirators. These included Jack Glenn, a painter, who read the Bible aloud also, and spoke of deliverance from bondage. Another was Monday, an Ibo from lower Niger. A third conspirator was "Gullah Jack," a conjuror. A fourth, Peter Royas, a ship's carpenter, believed they'd get help from England.

Thus the revolt brought together a coalition of different workers, agrarian, artisan, and nautical. They were from different traditions - Nigerian, Methodist, and conjure, England, the West Indies, and America. The revolt expressed the power of trans-Atlantic pan-Africanism. It scared the shit out of the slavocrats. (Pardon my French, but I remember Dr. James Murray preaching about a similar mess produced by the King of Moab, "I should beg the reader's pardon ... but as it is the excrement of kings and great men, I hope I shall be excused.") Thus frightened, the slavocrats passed the 1822 Negro Seaman Act which permitted the Sheriff to board any and every incoming vessel and to arrest and jail any and every Black sailor for the duration of the ship's stay in the port of Charleston.

Wedderburn had trusted his writings to sailors for their safe conveyance to Jamaica; he understood the prominence and strategic importance of the ship's cook in the transmission of struggle. David Walker, as well, used the underground post-offices manned by black sailors and slop-dealers, for they carried his *Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World, but in particular, and very expressly, to those of The United States of America* (1829), to the ports of the South. Walker's fulminations against

the avaricious oppressors, his refutations of the racism of Thomas Jefferson as well as the arguments of other apologists, his exposure of the hypocrisy of the Christian slave masters, above all, his call for an armed war of liberation made his Appeal the manifesto of African-American freedom. It's style and content is in the prophetic tradition of Ezekiel and Isaiah.

13: JUBILEE. By the third decade of the 19th century jubilee was present on both sides of the Atlantic, an idea and a practise common to workers of both the cotton plantation and the cotton factory. It possessed both prophetic leaders and an insurrectionary experience. In the decades to follow, despite the defeat of Vesey and of the Cato St. conspirators, the jubilee traditon grew. In America it concentrated on slavery and found victory in Civil War. In England it concentrated on land and found power among the Chartists.

"Do you think that the present state of the common lands in the neighbourhood of Nottingham has an effect upon the morals of the parties living there?" asked an investigator of the 1844 *Parliamentary Selected Committee on the Inclosure of Commons*. The response illustrates the contradictions of the bourgeoisie. "A very prejudicial effect certainly.... It occasions very great disrespect to the laws of the country generally; as an instance, I may say, that when the day upon which the lands become commonable arrives, which, with respect to a considerable portion is the 12th of August, the population issue out, destroy the fences, tear down the gates, and commit a great many other lawless acts which they certainly have a right to do, in respect of the right of common to which they are entitled."

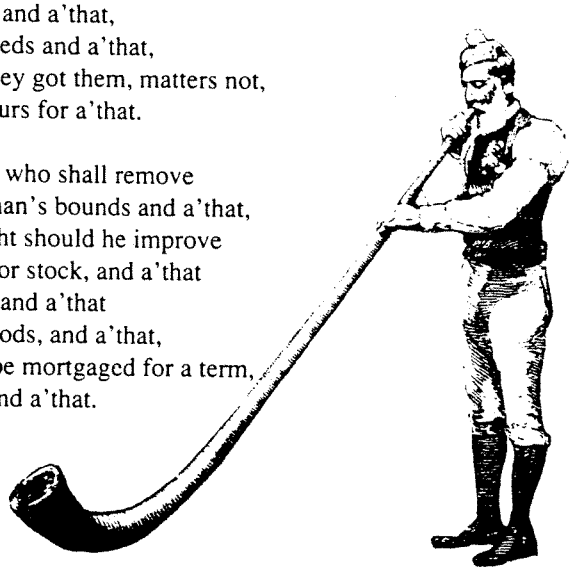
"Prejudicial" ... "disrespect" ... "lawless": yet the people have a "right," they are "entitled". The exchange is interesting for another reason. Why the 12th of August? In 1839 the Chartist National Convention accepted 12 August as a holiday to commence a general strike. It appears, then, that the Nottingham commoners, in observing the 12 August as a day of levelling, were acting in conformance with the national Chartists. William Benbow, author of *The Grand National Holiday and Congress of the Productive Classes* (1831), had recommended 12 August. Benbow's pamphlet noted that a miniscule five hundreth part of society had a monstrous power over the other 499. The 499 "create the state, [they] are its instruments upon all occasions, without whom it cannot go on for a single second, [they] dig deep, rise early, watch late, by whose sweat and toil the whole face of nature is beautified." By contrast the five hundreth "exist on disease and blood: crime and infamy are the breath of their nostrils."

"When a grand national holiday, festival, or feast is proposed, let none of our readers imagine that the proposal is new. It was an established custom among the Hebrews." Benbow referred to the Jubilee, "the year of release was a continued-unceasing festival." He advocated a month long holiday to hold a congress of the productive classes, a month of universal discussions in every city, town, village, and parish. How were they to live? "By rendering unto the Lord that which is the Lords," he wrote. "Until the Lord's cattle be forthcoming." For a start he suggested going to the "mansion of some great liberal lord." "We must avoid all squeamishness." "We beg of the people to throw off all false delicacy.". The sentiment is Ezekiel's exactly: "Behold the day! The doom is here, it has burst upon them. Injustice buds, insolence blossoms, violence shoots up into injustice and wickedness. ... The trumpet has sounded and all is ready, but no one goes out to war." (7:10,14)

The plan was endorsed by the Chartist press. *The Glasgow Agitator* called for land nationalization. George Petrie in *Man* called for the abolition of private property, the "desolating, barbarous, and unnatural institution." Doherty in *The Poor Man's Advocate* fervently campaigned for the plan and the repudiation of the national debt. In 1849 Spence's *The Restorer* was reprinted in *The Northern Star*. First published in 1803 Spence praises Moses. "O Moses! What a generous plan didst thou form! ... Thou indulgingly ordainest Holidays and Times of Rejoicing out of number. New Moons, and Sabbaths, and Jubilees, Feasts of Trumpets, Feast of Tabernacles, &c., and liberal Sacrifices which were Feasts of hospitality and Love..." Instead of holidays the Pharoah of England forces people to "make Bricks without straw." The Chartists sang (1840):

The rights of man then's in the soil
  An equal share and a' that,
For landlords no one ought to toil-
  'Tis imposition and a' that,
  Yes, a'that and a'that,
Their title-deeds and a'that,
  Howe'er they got them, matters not,
The land is ours for a'that.

Cursed be he who shall remove
  The poor man's bounds and a'that,
Or covet aught should he improve
  His house, or stock, and a'that
  Yes, a'that and a'that
His cattle, goods, and a'that,
  Could but be mortgaged for a term,
Till Jubilee and a'that.



14: JUBILEE. "He told us that all the country would be up, for the great jubilee was to come, and we must go with 'em." These were the words of a woebegone Kentish woman whose husband was imprisoned in Canterbury for his part in the disastrous Battle of Bossenden Wood in May 1838. At the time the agricultural workers of Kent were called "white slaves." Diptheria was rampant among them; they lived in dwellings called "birdcages" — bedrooms measured 8' x 5' x 6'. Eight years earlier in the "Swing Riots" they attempted to prevent the introduction of steam-powered threshing machines. Mutinous discontent smouldered fiercely to awaken briefly in the 1838 jubilee.

Thirty or forty poor people of Kent — vagabonds, small-holders, farm laborers — led by the extraordinary Sir William Courtenay faced soldiers of the Royal Army amid the osier-beds of Bossenden Wood in a battle resulting in several casualties and utter, lamentable defeat for the Kentish rebels. The episode is treated as an example of pathetic derangement. It is true that Sir William Courtenay had been committed to a lunatic asylum and

that he was an impostor (he was born John Nichols the son of a Cornish inn-keeper). He was more than six foot. He had long black hair. He was immensely strong. In 1821 he visited London and secretly joined a Spencean Society.

In 1832 he disappeared from his wife and business, and re-appeared on the other side of the country in outlandish dress posing as Sir William Courtenay, Knight of Malta, King of the Gypsies, King of Jerusalem. He became a darling of the Canterbury mob, he allied himself with the smuggling community of north Kent, he stood for Parliament, and edited a newspaper. He asserted the rights of the poor against the New Poor Law, against tithes, against flogging, against the Rich. Despite his crazed grandeur, flamboyant pretensions, and mental breaks, he appealed deeply to the Kentish peasantry who were willing to risk and lose their lives for this jubilee.

The Kentish rural proletariat though close to London was in many ways exceptional — it was godless and lawless in the sense that the Established Church had made few inroads and that its customary agrarian relations largely descended from the forest economy of ancient times rather than the "Improving" enclosed agriculture. Moreoever, it was pious in strictly non-conformist meanings. Indeed, there was little singing at the parish church following the battle because most of the Hunhill Church choir was either dead or in jail. Spencean ideas "led to his hopeless attempt to overthrow the established order in Kent." The defeat in battle of this jubilee was the last time that the English Army was used in combat against the English proletariat on English soil.

15: JUBILEE. Laurence Oliphant, a correspondent for the London *Times* toured the American South in 1854. He was born in Capetown of Evangelical parents. His father became the Chief Justice of Ceylon. Laurence worked for him; by age 22 he had tried 23 murder cases. Later he was "Superintendant of Indian Affairs" for the Governor-General of Canada. He was a typical Victorian imperialist adventurer — "Dancing, travelling, and political business filled up his time agreeably." He joined Walker's expedition to Nicaragua for "the fun of the thing." In the American South he recorded,

> Broders, don't you hear the horn?
> Yes, Lord, I hear the horn;
> The horn sounds the jubilee.
> Sisters, don't you hear the horn?
> Yes, Lord, I hear the horn;
> The horn sounds from the door.
> Mourners, don't you hear the horn?
> Yes, Lord, I hear the horn;
> The horn sounds like broder Tony's horn.

The English-American jubilee connection was complex. There was more to it than English proletarians going for the land, and American cotton proletarians going for liberation from slavery. Some of the English followers of Robert Owen, the factory owner and utopian socialist, introduced jubilee into Owenism, and Owenism found a place for itself on Davis Bend of the Mississippi where Jefferson Davis, the President of the Confederacy, and his brother had a big plantation. They introduced Owenite notions of labor management on the plantation. The workers, well-housed and well-fed, were slaves still. Nevertheless, to them "jubilee" or "jubilo" meant emancipation. Profesor Levine tells us that "throughout the south the newly freed slaves sang variants of the ubiquitous lines,"

> Old master's gone away and the darkies
> stayed at home;
> Must be now that the kingdom's come
> and the year for jubilee.

Joseph Greenleaf Whittier wrote in 1862,

> Oh, praise an' tanks! De Lord he come
> To set de people free
> An' massa tink it day ob doom,
> An' we ob jubilee.

In 1862 the most popular song in the northern States was "Kingdom Coming," composed by Henry Clay Work, the son of an Underground Railway militant. He worked with the Christy Minstrels. The song became a rallying cry. It's chorus:

> De massa run? ha, ha!
> De darkey stay? ho, ho!
> It mus' be now de kingdom comin'
> An' de year ob Jubilo!

And Work composed "Marching Through Georgia,"

> Hoo-rah, hoo-rah, we bring the Jubilee
> Hoo-rah, hoo-rah, the flag that makes you free!
> And so we sang the anthem from Atlanta to the sea,
> As we were marching through Georgia!

The theme appeared in rock,

> I have no time for stay at home
> O rock o' jubilee,
> and I rock 'em all about
> O Lord, de rock o' jubilee.

The theme appeared as lullaby (to the tune of "Michael, Row Your Boat Ashore"),

> What is the matter the church won't shout, O Lordy,
> Somebody in there that ought to be out, My Lord, Jubilee.
> Jubilee, Jubilee O Lordy
> Jubilee, Jubilee, My Lord, Jubilee.

And the theme has appeared as country swing,

> Sing and turn, jubilee
> Live and learn, jubilee.

The theme appeared as a Sea Island "shout" with wake-up, dance-around rhythms as rendered by the McIntosh County Shouters,

> Shout, my children, 'cause yo' free
> My God brought you liberty
> Jubilee, Jubilee, Jubilee in the Morning
> Call me a Sunday Christian, Call me a Monday devil
> Don' care what you call me so long Jesus love me
> Jubilee, Jubilee, Jubilee, Jubilee.

The theme appeared as a stevedore's shanty useful for energy in stowing Alabama pine timbers aboard schooners bound for Europe and for notifying "the other fellow how to pull down with you,"

> I'm a noble soldier,
> Soldier of the Jubilee. Hah!
> I'm getting old and crippled in my knee
> Soldier of the Cross. Hah!

On first of January 1863 Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation. "In Rochester, Columbus, Philadelphia, and Chicago Negroes hailed Lincoln's signing of the proclamation as inaugurating the Year of Jubilee," to quote John Hope Franklin. Cannon fired, bells rung. The Reverend Henry Highland Garnet presided at New York's Shiloh Presbyterian Church's New Year's Eve Grand Emanciaption Jubilee where at midnight the choir sang "Blow Ye Trumpets Blow, the Year of Jubilee has come."

Frederick Douglass, two of whose sons served in the 54th Regiment, called the First of January "the most memorable day in American Annals." "The fourth of July was great, but the first of January, when we consider it in all its relations and bearings, is incomparably greater." And it has been celebrated as such, with Juneteenth, by African-Americans, just as West Indians celebrate 1 August commemorating the emancipation of 1834. "Jubilee Pageants" with prominent roles for Nat Turner and George Lisle alike have been part of these celebrations, and for those celebrating Lee's surrender. In Athens, Georgia, blacks sang and danced around a liberty pole. In Charleston, South Carolina, William Lloyd Garrison, Robert Smalls, Martin Delany, and the son of Denmark Vesey participated with thousands of others in marches and speeches celebrating the victory over those who had hanged Denmark Vesey only thirty-three years ealier. These are the classic jubilee days: "Isn't I a free woman now! De Lord can make Heaven out of Hell any time, I do believe," as a Virginia woman said.

This is all very well. But, let us remember the planned massacre at Fort Wagner and the slogan of the people in Bahia during the centennial of Brazilian emancipation in 1988 - "One Hundred Years of Emancipation, One Hundred Years of Nothing." The "Day of Jubilo" was one part of the story; the other part was expressed with suspicion and reticience. "Dey didn' know jus' zackly what it meant," a slave of Jefferson Davis said. "Whar we gwine eat an' sleep?" What about the patrollers and po' buckra?

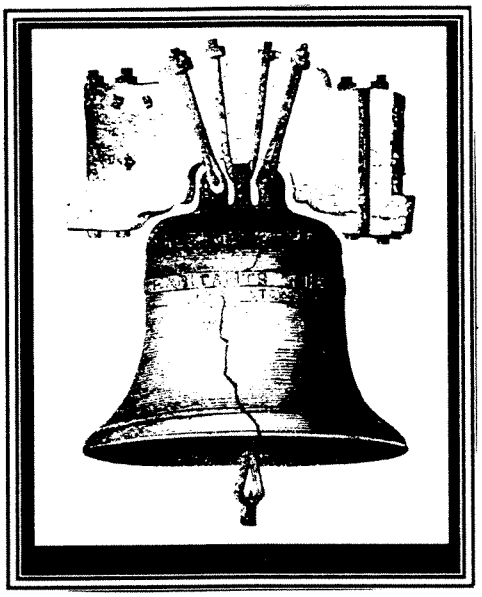
16: JUBILEE. Jubilee did not quite die in the second half of the 19th century, though it ceased to be the conch of revolution. Michael Davitt of the Irish Land League used it in the struggle against British imperial landlordship. "The Irishman, banished by sheep and ox, reappears on the other side of the ocean as a Fenian, and face to face with the old queen of the seas," wrote Marks, and the Irishman tossed jubilee in the face of English piety, he might have added, in the person of Edward McGlynn, the priest of St. Stephen's in Manhattan and ally of the Knights of Labor, who, in a sermon on St. Patrick's Day, 1887, compared the ancient Irish Breton laws with the Jubilee, and was excommunicated as a result. Henry George often invoked the idea and argued that jubilee was "absolutely fatal to the idea of private property in land." In noting that Charles Marks was influenced by some of the Chartist Spenceans, or that the pompous and chauvinist H.M. Hyndman compared *The Communist Manifesto* to Spence's jubilee we succumb to antiquarianism.

Jubilee expressed liberation against imperialism in the 13th century B.C. It opposed slavery, landlordship, credit-and-debt, the work ethic, pollution of the earth, and it advised revolution every fifty years. For several thousand years its meaning was distorted or ignored. With the advent of industrial capitalism the enclosed working class of England and the enslaved African-American working class rediscovered jubilee. They adopted jubilee to freedom and anti-capitalism; they expanded its meaning and gave it bite.

At the same time, the bourgeoise, since jubilee could not be denied, developed a hermeneutics that disrobed jubilee of its liberating splendor turning it into "figurative language." The language of action becomes a language of adornment, a rhetoric, an allegory, or "just words." On the one hand this permits advances in textual and philological criticism, but on the other hand, it opens the door to pedantry and cynicism, taking the revolutionary tooth out of the scriptural mouth. At its base it is a reactionary, if not a blasphemous argument.

The "higher criticism" of 19th century bourgeois hermeneutics turned the living word into the dead hand of the past. Their interpretation of jubilee is reformist at best and reactionary at worst. To the extent that jubilee opposes work, they say it was an impossible ideal, if not immoral. The green, or ecological theme, like sabbatarianism, is ignored or reduced to backward technological conditions. The revolutionary liberation from slavery is absent or reduced to an archaic, if not barbaric, extension of ge'ulla, the duty of blood-revenge among feuding clans. The restitution of land and the remission of debts are treated as entirely impractical and utopian, or are allowed as perhaps a compromise a very long time ago to ease the transition to agrarian "civilization"!

The bourgeoisie has used jubilee on state occasions. The 1776 Philadelphia Liberty Bell is engraved with Leviticus 25 - "You shall proclaim liberty throughout the land." It rings with a pathetic clunk. Why? because it is cracked. It cracked, according to African-American lore, when Abe Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation.



Author's Note: I thank Bill French of the Afro-American Book Store in Greenwich Village, Profesor Vincent Wimbush of the Harvard Divinity School, Randall Conrad of Calliope Films, Rev. Dr. Virgil Wood of the Pond Street Baptist Church in Providence, Rhode Island, Dr. Carl Estabrook of Indiana, Noel Ignatiev of Dunster House, Steve Connor of the Paulist Center, Fabian and Teri of Bounds Green, north London, and Wendy Shilton for research on the tune "God Save the King."

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Naim Stifan Ateek, *Justice, and Only Justice: A Palestinian Theology of Liberation* (1989).
P.M. Ashraf, *The Life and Times of Thomas Spence* (1983).
Steven Bell, *Rebel, Priest and Prophet: A Biography of Dr. Edward McGlynn* (1937).
Ira Berlin et al (eds.), *Freedom: A Documentary History of Emancipation, 1861-1867*, series II, *The Black Military Experience* (1983).
Arna Bontemps, *Black Thunder* (1936).
Malcolm Chase, *"The People's Farm:" English Radical Agrarianism, 1775-1840* (1988).
James H. Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation*, second edition (1986).
Harvey Cox, *The Silencing of Leonardo Boff: The Vatican and the Future of World Christianity* (1988).
Dena J. Epstein, *Sinful Tunes and Spirituals: Black Folk Music to the Civil War* (1977).
Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (1988).
John Hope Franklin, *The Emancipation Proclamation* (1963).
Peter Fryer, *Staying Power: The History of Black People in England* (1984).
G.I. Gallop (ed.), *Pig's Meat: The Selected Writings of Thomas Spence, Radical and Pioneer Land Reformer* (1982).
Henry George, *The Condition of Labor: An Open Letter to Pope Leo XIII* (1891).
Norman Gottwald, *The Tribes of Yahweh*
Charolotte Forten Grimké, *The Journals*, Schomburg Library of Nineteenth Century Black Women Writers (1988).
Gustavo Gutiérez, *A Theology of Liberation* (1971).
Robert Hughes, *The Fatal Shore: The Epic of Australia's Founding* (1987).
Zora Neale Hurston, *Mules and Men* (1935).
T.R. Knox, "Thomas Spence: The Trumpet of Jubilee," *Past & Present*, 76 (1977).
Lawrence W. Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought from Slavery to Freedom* (1977).
John Lofton, *Denmark Vesey's Revolt* (1964).
Iain McCalman, *Radical Underworld: Prophets, Revolutionaries and Pornographers in London, 1795-1840* (1988).
José Miranda, *Marx and the Bible* (1971).
Robert E. Moody, "Samuel Ely: Forerunner of Shays," *The New England Quarterly*, V (1932).
Robert North, *Sociology of the Biblical Jubilee* (1954).
Iorwerth Prothero, "William Benbow," *Past & Present*, 63 (1974).
Albert J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion: The "Invisible Institution" in the Antebellum South* (1978).
Sharon H. Ringe, *Jesus, Liberation, and the Biblical Jubilee: Images for Ethics and Christology* (1985).
P.G. Rogers, *Battle in Bossenden Wood: The Strange Story of Sir William Courtenay* (1962).
Alan S. Taylor, "'Indians' and 'White Men:' Maine's Land Unrest, 1790-1815," (1982).
Margaret Walker, *Jubilee* 1964).
Raymond Westbrook, "Jubilee Laws," *Israel Law Review* 6 (1971).
Joel H. Wiener, *The War of the Unstamped* (1969).
William H. Wiggins, *O Freedom! American Emancipation Celebrations* (1987).

A N N O U N C I N G !
BAD ATTITUDE
The Processed World Anthology
Edited by Chris Carlsson with Mark Leger
A 286-page volume of the best of PROCESSED WORLD's first 20 issues.
"There has been no magazine that I can think of in the last 10 years that has more diligently and excellently fulfilled the first duty of radical journalism: to describe the world as it actually is."
—Alexander Cockburn
Coming this summer from Verso/New Left Books
Or write to: BACAT, 1095 Market St., Suite 209, San Francisco, California 94103 • (415) 626-2979
And don't miss Issue 25 of Processed World!
COMING IN JUNE 1990